



Activity 2

RealCare™ Drug-Affected Baby

In this activity, the instructor uses the RealCare™ Drug-Affected Baby to show some of the physical signs of prenatal drug exposure (crying and tremors), and to introduce the associated cognitive, emotional, and behavioral effects of prenatal drug exposure. Participants learn about the physical effects of prenatal drug exposure and learn about the related lifelong disabilities experienced by a drug-affected child.

Objectives

Participants will:

1. List the effects of prenatal drug exposure.
2. Explain what happens developmentally to the fetus when a pregnant woman uses drugs.
3. Identify the long-term consequences of prenatal drug exposure for individuals, families, and society.

Materials

- Drug-Affected Baby

Time

10 to 15 minutes

Facilitating the Activity

1. Hold the Drug-Affected Baby in your arms as you would a real infant, and “introduce” the Drug-Affected Baby to the class.
2. Explain that this Drug-Affected Baby represents a baby recently discharged from the hospital after receiving

treatment for symptoms of prenatal drug exposure.

Physical Signs of Prenatal Drug Exposure

1. Ask participants what they notice about the Drug-Affected Baby’s physical features that are different from the features of a typical baby. Add information as needed to supplement their observations:
 - Painful facial expression
 - Small size for gestational age
 - Unusually thin arms and legs
2. Explain that in addition to these visible signs, babies prenatally exposed to drugs can also have brain damage and lifelong disabilities.

Crying and Tremors

1. Explain that in addition to the physical signs of prenatal drug exposure, drug-affected newborns go through painful withdrawal symptoms that cause them to cry and tremble.
2. Turn the switch on the back of the Drug-Affected Baby to ON. Explain that the cry is a recording of a real infant experiencing withdrawal from cocaine addiction due to the mother’s cocaine use during pregnancy.
3. As the Drug-Affected Baby cries and trembles, explain to participants that a baby going through withdrawal can cry and tremble for hours. Because drug-affected infants have a delayed response to the care they receive, a baby may continue to cry for a long time even if he or she has been picked up and cared for.
4. Ask participants how the cry of a drug-affected baby is different from the cry of a typical, healthy baby.

5. Point out that a typical, healthy baby usually only cries when it needs care or attention, as participants may recall from their experience with real infants or with the Realityworks® RealCare® Baby.
6. Hand the Drug-Affected Baby to a participant, and instruct participants to carefully pass the Drug-Affected Baby to each other and observe the physical features. Use the ON/OFF switch to stop the cry and tremors as needed.
7. As participants are passing the Drug-Affected Baby to each other, lead a brief discussion of what life would be like for a child in this much distress, and for the parent or guardian of a child who has been prenatally exposed to drugs.