

Apnea of prematurity

What is apnea?

During an apnea spell, breathing stops for 20 seconds or longer.

What causes apnea?

Many babies who are born prematurely (early) may have apnea spells. One reason is because the respiratory center in the brain has not fully developed the ability to control breathing.

What are the signs of apnea?

- no breathing
- pale or bluish color
- limpness
- bradycardia (slow heartbeat)

What is done for apnea of prematurity?

A monitor is used to help watch your baby's breathing and heart rate.

Stimulation, such as back-rubbing and oxygen can help when an apnea episode occurs.

Your baby's doctor may prescribe a medicine such as aminophylline, theophylline, or caffeine to stimulate the breathing center in the brain.

If the apnea does not improve and the baby has more spells, other measures may be used such as:

- more stimulation
- oxygen
- giving the baby some breaths with a resuscitation bag and mask
- a continuous positive airway pressure machine (CPAP)
- a ventilator (breathing machine)

Questions?

This sheet is not specific to your child but provides general information. If you have any questions, please ask the doctors or nurses.

For more reading material about this and other health topics, please call or visit the Family Resource Center library, or visit our Web site: www.childrensmn.org.

Children's Hospitals and Clinics of Minnesota
Patient/Family Education
2525 Chicago Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55404
5/08 ©Copyright