

Jaundiced Newborn

Definition

- Jaundice means the skin has turned a yellow color.
- Bilirubin is the pigment that turns the skin yellow.
- The liver normally gets rid of bilirubin. But at birth, the liver may be immature.
- Half of babies have some jaundice. Usually, it is mild and doesn't need any treatment.

Care Advice

1. Overview:

- Some jaundice is present in 50% of newborns.
- It lasts a short time and will go away. Most often, it is harmless.
- The first place for jaundice to start is on the face.
- Jaundice that is only of the face is harmless.
- The level of bilirubin that is harmful is around 20. Reaching a level this high is rare.
- High levels need to be treated with bili-lights. That's why your doctor checks your baby's bilirubin levels until it becomes low.
- Here is some care advice that should help.

2. Bottlefed:

- If bottle fed, increase how often you feed your baby.
- Try to feed every 2 to 3 hours during the day.
- Don't let your baby sleep more than 4 hours at night without a feeding.

3. Breastfed:

- If breastfed, increase how often you feed your baby.
- Nurse your baby every 1½ to 2 hours during the day.
- Don't let your baby sleep more than 4 hours at night without a feeding.
- Goal: At least 10 feedings every 24 hours.

4. Infrequent Stools Means Your Baby Needs More Milk:

- Breastmilk and formula help carry bilirubin out of the body. Therefore, good feedings are important for bringing down the bilirubin level.
- In the first weeks, keep track of how many stools are passed daily. The number of stools reflects how much milk your baby is getting.
- If your baby is 5 days or older, he should have at least 3 stools daily. If stooling less than that, it usually means your baby needs more to eat.
- Try to increase the number and amount of feedings per day.
- If you are having any trouble with breastfeeding, consult a lactation expert. Also, schedule a weight check.

5. What to Expect:

- Physiological jaundice peaks on day 4 or 5.
- It slowly goes away over 1-2 weeks.

Call Your Doctor Back If...

- Jaundice gets worse
- Belly or legs turn yellow
- Feeds poorly or has a weak suck
- Your baby starts to look or act abnormal
- Jaundice lasts more than 14 days
- You think your baby needs to be seen

This handout is intended for informational purposes only and should not be used as a substitute for the care and advice of a medical professional. The accuracy of the information contained in this handout is not guaranteed and there may be variations in treatment that your doctor or nurse may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

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