

## Useful Web addresses:

National Institute for Health and Clinical  
Excellence  
[www.nice.org.uk](http://www.nice.org.uk)

NHS Choices  
[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

Patient Info Symptom Checker:  
[www.patient.info](http://www.patient.info)

Children's Liver Disease Foundation  
[www.childliverdisease.org](http://www.childliverdisease.org)



**Mid Cheshire Hospitals**  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Signs and Symptoms of Newborn Jaundice

Information for parents and carers



This leaflet is available in audio, Braille,  
large print and other languages.  
To request a copy, please telephone  
01270 612287.

**Ward 23**  
Leighton Hospital  
Middlewich Road  
Crewe  
Cheshire  
CW1 4QJ

**Direct Line: 01270 612287**



**Because you ♥atter**

## **What is Newborn Jaundice?**

It is very common for newborn babies to become jaundiced within the first two weeks of their life, however if your baby becomes jaundiced within the first 24 hours of life, seek urgent medical advice from Ward 23 (01270 612287).

Physiological jaundice occurs in around one third of all babies, when red blood cells are broken down in the circulation and during this process a chemical called bilirubin is made. Bilirubin is usually changed in the liver and removed from the body through passing urine and stools. There is a delay in this process, as most babies' livers need a few days to start working properly and that's why many newborns become jaundiced.

Babies who appear jaundiced may need blood tests to see if they need treatment. In rare cases, jaundice can indicate your baby may be unwell and need further assessment and treatment.

Your baby may show signs that they are jaundiced; signs you should look out for are:

- Yellowing of their skin, usually their face and forehead which then spreads to their body.
- Yellowing of the whites of their eyes, gums and roof of their mouth.
- If your baby is sleeping all day and too sleepy or reluctant to feed.

## **What should I do if I think my baby is jaundiced?**

You should contact your Community Midwife or the Community Midwives Office on the number in the front of your pregnancy care record. If you are concerned or unable to contact your Community Midwife, please ring Ward 23 (01270 612287).

In most cases jaundice is not harmful to your baby and will often be gone by day 10. If your baby is still showing signs of being jaundiced at 14 days of age or becomes jaundiced after a period of normal skin colour, seek advice from your Midwife, Health Visitor or GP.

## **How will my baby be tested for jaundice?**

With your consent, a Midwife or Paediatrician will measure the amount of bilirubin in your baby's blood. This is done either by placing a hand-held device over your baby's forehead or chest, or by taking a blood sample from your baby's foot.

The results will show whether your baby requires further testing or treatment which will be discussed with you by the Midwife or Paediatrician.

## **As a parent how can I help?**

Your role as a parent is very important. If your baby has any form of jaundice then the first priority is to ensure your baby is drinking plenty of milk. Your baby should be having a feed at least every three hours to help bodily processes reduce the jaundice. If you have difficulty with feeding, speak to your Midwife or Ward 23 staff about a feeding plan.

## **What treatment is available?**

Jaundice is treated by phototherapy, which is a safe and effective blue-light treatment. It works by your baby's skin absorbing blue light which helps to change the excess bilirubin into a harmless form. The bilirubin is then more easily processed and removed through your baby's urine and stools.

If your baby requires phototherapy, an additional leaflet will be given to you containing details about how to care for your baby and further treatment if required.