

What is Phototherapy?

Phototherapy is a safe treatment which helps to decrease jaundice. The bilirubin in the tissues is changed so that it can be passed in the urine and bowel movements.

One method for phototherapy is a special blue lightpad/blanket placed directly on the skin along your baby's back. You may cuddle and feed your baby with the pad in place as much as possible.

Another phototherapy method used is placing your baby in an incubator with overhead lights in addition to the blanket. Your baby is without clothes (diaper only) as this allows more skin to be exposed to the light. Protective eye pads are worn to shield his/her eyes from the light.

Your health care provider will decide which method is best for your baby and if extra fluids may be needed.

What to do when going Home?

Your baby will have more frequent loose bowel movements, either dark green or greenish-yellow in colour. Your baby's bowel movements will return to normal in a day or two after the bilirubin level goes down.

Your baby may still be a little jaundiced when you go home. Continue to feed at least 8-10 feedings in 24 hours in response to baby's cues.

If you are concerned that your baby is not feeding well, sleepy all the time, or becoming more jaundiced, phone your health care provider right away, or take your baby to the nearest hospital.

Reference: www.caringforkids.cps.ca
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Jaundice and your Baby



What is Jaundice?

Jaundice is a yellow colouring of the skin and the whites of the eyes. It is caused by extra bilirubin in the baby's blood system. Bilirubin comes from the breakdown of red blood cells.

Red Blood Cells – oxygen is carried in red blood cells.

Bilirubin – is the waste product from the breakdown of red blood cells.

How do Babies get Jaundice?

Babies produce a high level of red blood cells while in the womb or uterus. They do not need as much red blood cells after they are born. The extra red blood cells are broken down releasing bilirubin. The liver must process the bilirubin before the body can get rid of it through the urine and stool. Sometimes the baby's liver cannot handle all the extra bilirubin and it is deposited in the skin and the whites of the eyes.

Jaundice is fairly common and is a normal part of your baby's adjustment to life after birth. Many babies become jaundiced at about 2 or 3 days after birth, reaching the highest level around 4-5 days of life and gradually decreasing by the end of the first week.

Some Conditions that increase the chances that your baby will be jaundiced include:

Prematurity – the liver is less mature and takes longer to remove the bilirubin.

Bruising – there are more red blood cells that need to be removed.

Baby has a different blood type than mother – antibodies from the mother can breakdown the baby's red blood cells.

What to do About Jaundice?

Colostrum/Breastmilk has a laxative effect and helps get rid of bilirubin through the baby's bowels.

If you notice your baby becoming jaundiced, feed him/her more frequently, at least every 3 - 4 hours during the day and on demand at night. You may need to wake your baby to ensure frequent feedings, 8-10 feedings in 24hours.

Bilirubin can cross from the blood into your baby's brain.

If the bilirubin reaches very high levels, this can collect in your baby's brain causing brain damage.

Most babies have mild jaundice which is not harmful; however, we monitor all babies to prevent harmful effects.

A blood sample is taken with your baby's routine screening for metabolic diseases. Your health care provider will plot the results on a graph to decide if your baby needs to have phototherapy, or a follow-up visit and further blood tests.