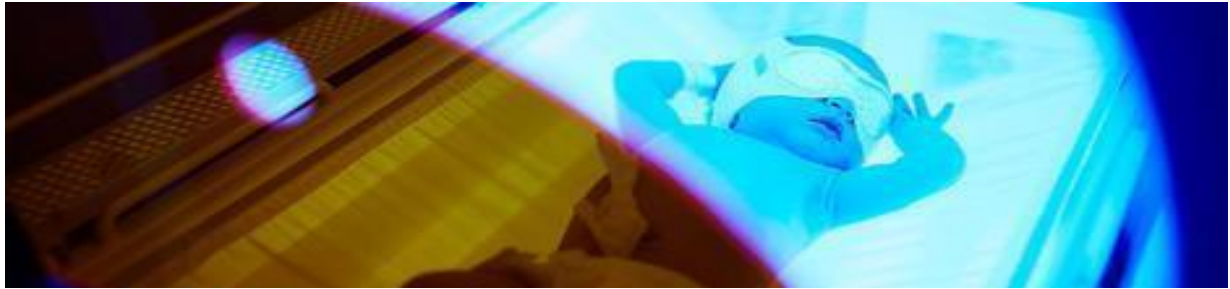


## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT JAUNDICE IN BABIES



### WHAT IS JAUNDICE AND WHY DOES IT HAPPEN?

- ✓ Jaundice is a condition that causes yellowing of the baby's skin and eyes
- ✓ This change in skin color happens because a baby's liver is not mature enough to get rid of bilirubin in the bloodstream

### HOW CAN I TELL IF MY BABY IS JAUNDICED?

- ✓ The jaundice (yellow coloring) usually appears on the face and then moves to the chest, belly and then arms and legs as bilirubin levels get higher
- ✓ It may be harder to see in babies with darker skin
- ✓ The best way to see jaundice is in daylight or under a fluorescent light

### WHEN SHOULD MY BABY'S BILIRUBEN LEVEL BE CHECKED?

- ✓ Any baby that has jaundice in the first 24 hours after birth should have the bilirubin level measured right away
- ✓ All other babies should have at least one bilirubin measurement with a blood test before leaving the hospital
- ✓ Some babies may need multiple bilirubin checks if they are at risk for high bilirubin levels

### CAN JAUNDICE HURT MY NEWBORN AND HOW DO I PREVENT THAT?

- ✓ Most babies get mild jaundice and have no problems
- ✓ In some rare cases where the bilirubin gets really high, it can cause brain damage
- ✓ All babies should have a follow up visit very soon (usually 1-3 days) after leaving the hospital
- ✓ Some babies have a greater risk for high levels of bilirubin and may need to be seen sooner

### ASK YOUR DOCTOR ABOUT AN EARLY FOLLOW UP VISIT IF YOUR BABY HAS ANY OF THE FOLLOWING:

- **A high bilirubin level before leaving the hospital**
- **Early birth (more than 2 weeks before the due date)**
- **Jaundice in the first 24 hours after birth**
- **Breastfeeding that is not yet going well**
- **Bleeding under the scalp or a lot of bruising related to labor and delivery**
- **A parent, brother, or sister who had a high bilirubin level and received light therapy**
- **If you have a family history of G6PD deficiency or another red blood cell disorder**

## DOES BREASTFEEDING AFFECT JAUNDICE?

- ✓ Human milk is the ideal food for babies, but jaundice is more common in breastfed babies
- ✓ It is very important to try to feed your baby at least 8-12 times a day in the first few days
- ✓ If you are having trouble, ask your baby's doctor or nurse for help! A lactation specialist can work with you to monitor and improve feedings

## HOW IS JAUNDICE TREATED?

- ✓ Most jaundice requires no treatment!
- ✓ When treatment is needed, babies are placed under special lights (phototherapy)
- ✓ Phototherapy helps lower the bilirubin level by making it easier for your baby's body to remove the bilirubin through their urine and stool
- ✓ These lights do not create ultraviolet (UV) radiation like the sun and do not increase your baby's risk of skin cancer
- ✓ Babies wear eye protection and are undressed to maximize the amount of skin exposed to the lights
- ✓ **Putting your baby into sunlight is not a safe way to treat jaundice because of the harmful UV rays and heat from the direct sun**
- ✓ Some babies will require adding in formula feeding with breastfeeding for a short time until breastmilk production increases
- ✓ Very high bilirubin levels is a medical emergency that might require the baby to be admitted to the intensive care unit and other treatment, including a special type of blood transfusion that can rapidly decrease the bilirubin level

## MY BABY IS JAUNDICED. WHY IS MY BABY NOT RECEIVING PHOTOTHERAPY?

- ✓ Treatment is not needed for jaundice unless the bilirubin levels are high
- ✓ Treatment that is not needed is not recommended
- ✓ Phototherapy is generally safe, but there is a very small risk for seizures in babies who receive phototherapy

## WHEN DOES JAUNDICE GO AWAY?

- ✓ In breastfed babies, it is common for jaundice to last 1 month or occasionally longer
- ✓ In formula-fed babies, most jaundice goes away by 2 weeks

## WHEN SHOULD I CALL MY BABY'S DOCTOR AFTER I LEAVE THE HOSPITAL?

- Your baby's skin turns darker yellow
- Your baby's belly, arms or legs are yellow
- The whites of your baby's eyes are yellow
- Your baby is hard to wake, fussy, or not breastfeeding or taking formula well
- Your baby is still jaundiced 2 weeks after birth (formula fed) or 3 weeks after birth (breastfed)