

## Jaundice

A yellowish appearance of the whites of the eyes and the skin that may develop in newborn babies



### Signs

- The skin of a baby with jaundice usually appears yellow.
- Jaundice may appear first in the face and then moves to the chest, abdomen, arms and legs.
- The whites of the eyes also may be yellow.
- If the jaundice is severe, you may see:
  - Green, watery stools that may occur at the same time as the yellowness of the skin.
  - Your baby is less active.
  - Your baby is difficult to awaken or keep awake during feedings.
  - Signs of dehydration.
    - › Four or fewer wet diapers in 24 hours
    - › Dry mouth
    - › Sunken eyes
    - › Sunken soft spot on head
    - › Extreme irritability
    - › Listlessness (decreased activity)
    - › Possibly no tears



### What To Know

- Jaundice is usually a normal adjustment to living outside the womb. Usually no treatment is necessary.

- Jaundice is a common and usually harmless condition in newborn babies. It can occur when there is too much bilirubin present in the bloodstream.
- Jaundice can occur for other reasons:
  - Babies who are bruised at the time of birth
  - Babies born to diabetic mothers
  - Babies born with certain diseases or abnormalities
- It usually appears on the second or third day of life in healthy, full-term babies.
- In breastfed babies, jaundice often lasts for more than two to three weeks. In formula-fed babies, most jaundice goes away by two weeks.
- Breastfed babies are more likely to have jaundice.
  - Continue frequent breastfeeding (every two hours) unless otherwise directed by your health-care provider.
- Premature babies are more likely to have jaundice.
  - It may appear later and last longer, becoming most noticeable between the fifth and seventh day of life.
- If jaundice is present at birth or appears within the first 24 hours of life, treatment may be necessary and will vary according to cause and severity.

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- If the jaundice is mild, your health-care provider may order phototherapy at home by using:
  - Sunlight.
  - Artificial light.
  - Fiberoptic blanket. (This special blanket is wrapped around the baby's upper body while the baby is dressed and/or held.)
- Severe jaundice can be damaging to your baby's health, so close monitoring and treatment by your health-care provider is needed.



## What To Do

- Your baby's skin color and whites of the eyes should be observed daily for two weeks in natural sunlight.
  - It may be helpful to have a friend or family member look at your baby's skin color and whites of the eyes.
- Follow your health-care provider's instructions for follow-up lab work and recommended treatment.



## When To Call Your Health-Care Provider

- If the yellowness increases or spreads to more parts of the body.
- If your baby has green, watery stools that may occur at the same time as the yellowness of the skin.
- If your baby is difficult to awaken or keep awake for feedings.
- If your baby shows signs of dehydration.

