

# Jaundice and Your Newborn

After your baby is born, you may notice a yellow tint in your baby's skin. This condition is called jaundice. It is a common health concern for newborns. It is caused by high levels of a substance called "bilirubin" in the blood.

Jaundice usually appears on the second or third day after birth. It then peaks and goes away before the end of the second week. But if your baby has serious jaundice and doesn't get treatment quickly, it can lead to brain damage.

If you notice your baby looks yellow or tan, call your baby's healthcare provider. They may order a skin or blood test to check your baby's bilirubin level.

Jaundice may be missed in babies with darker or olive-colored skin. Checking their gums and inner lips may detect jaundice. If there is any doubt, a bilirubin test should be done.

To ensure your baby is safe from a severe complication called Kernicterus, your baby's healthcare provider will check your baby's health before you both leave the hospital.

Most cases are mild, but if the bilirubin levels are high, your child may need phototherapy. Your baby will be placed under special lights or laid on or wrapped in a small blanket that has fiber optic lights in it. This treatment is often done in the hospital. But it may be done at home.

Jaundice usually goes away after four weeks in breastfed babies and two weeks in formula fed babies. But call your child's healthcare provider if: Your baby's skin turns more yellow. Your baby's abdomen, arms, or legs are yellow. The whites of your baby's eyes are yellow. Or your baby is hard to wake up, fussy, or not feeding well.

When jaundice is not serious, you can help lower the levels of bilirubin. Make sure your baby is getting plenty to eat. If you're breastfeeding, feed your baby every 1 ½ to 2 hours during the day. Don't let your baby sleep more than 4 hours at night without a feeding.

If you're bottle feeding, try to feed your baby every 2 to 3 hours during the day. Regular feeding will help carry bilirubin out of the body. It can lower the bilirubin level.

The key to treating jaundice is early detection. If you think your baby has jaundice, call your baby's healthcare provider right away to keep your baby healthy.