

Jaundice in Newborns

Jaundice is the yellowing of the skin, the whites of the eyes (sclerae), and sometimes the gums. It happens when there's too much bilirubin in the blood. Jaundice may also be called hyperbilirubinemia (**hy**-per-bih-lih-**roo**-bih-**nee**-mee-uh). Jaundice in newborns:

- Usually appears within the first few days after birth and goes away in about 2 weeks.
- Usually doesn't cause any lasting effects. However, if there are high levels of bilirubin that aren't treated, it can cause serious problems.

Causes

Bilirubin is made in the red blood cells. The liver removes bilirubin, and it leaves the body in the pee (urine) and poop (stool). When babies are born early (premature), it takes a few days for their liver to start removing bilirubin.

Treatment

Many babies won't need treatment. If they do, a special light, called a bili light or phototherapy, is used. To help bilirubin leave the body, your baby will:

- Have bili lights shining on their skin as much as possible for about 1 to 2 days. These lights won't hurt your baby.
 - Their eyes will be covered with patches (Picture 1). They don't have to wear the patches when they're not under the light.
 - Feeding and diaper changes will be done around the same time so your baby can stay under the bili light as long as possible.



Picture 1 Your baby's eyes are covered to protect them from the light.

- Lie on a light pad called a biliblanket with no clothes on.
- Have tiny drops of blood taken from the heel of their foot about 2 or more times each day. This is to measure the amount of bilirubin in the blood. Some babies need to have their blood checked more often.
- Be fed every 2 to 3 hours so they can pee and poop, which moves the bilirubin out of their body.

After your baby's bilirubin level has gone down and the bili light is turned off, they'll go home unless they have other problems.

At Home

- Do not put your baby in the sun. It's not a safe way to treat jaundice. The heat from the sun and the exposure to ultraviolet (UV) light can hurt your baby.
- Your baby's doctor or health care provider may want to check their bilirubin level again after they leave the hospital.
- Call your baby's doctor or health care provider if:
 - They seem to be very sleepy.
 - They're not waking up to eat.
 - Their skin looks more yellow.

Infant Care Log

[illegible]