

If the level of bilirubin in your baby's blood is high, baby may need to be treated in hospital by putting him/her under special blue lights (not UV light).



Baby receiving phototherapy with a Biliblanket

It helps the body get rid of the bilirubin.

The blood levels will be checked regularly and treatment stops when the level comes down.



Baby under photo therapy lights.

In **very rare** cases some babies need blood

transfusions to prevent the baby developing brain damage and possible hearing loss.

In premature babies, jaundice is more common and the baby is treated at lower blood levels.

Sometimes baby may be more jaundiced because he/she has a different blood group from the mother.

This means that when baby has blood tests for the bilirubin level, a test may also be done to see what blood group he/she is. Sometimes this is done at birth with cord blood.

If baby has **very** high levels, he/she may need to be admitted to neonatal care and may need to have a fluid drip. Very rarely, a special blood transfusion may be needed for certain types of jaundice.

There can be other causes but they are rare.


Jaundice in the newborn baby



Information for Pregnant Women and Whanau



www.countiesmanukauhealth.org.nz

 <p>COUNTIES MANUKAU HEALTH</p>	Department: Women's Health	Updated: Jan. 2020
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Women's Health Division

What is jaundice?

Newborn babies often look like they have a yellowish tinge to their skin in the first days after birth.

This is called jaundice and very common.

This happens because babies have more red blood cells than they need after birth.

These were needed by the baby before birth.

The extra red blood cells are broken down in the baby's body; a result of blood cells breaking down is a yellow substance called bilirubin.

This will colour your baby's urine, skin and the whites of the eyes.

For most babies this is a normal event and not serious.

It almost always disappears gradually over the next days and no further treatment is necessary.

If jaundice happens within 24 hours after birth contact your midwife urgently, this could be the sign of another medical problem.

How will I know my baby is jaundiced?

Check if your baby's skin looks yellow. This is seen best in day light.

- The yellow colour usually starts on the face and forehead and then spreads to the body.
- Check if the whites of baby's eyes look yellow
- Jaundice may be harder to see in babies with darker skin.

Contact your midwife if you think your baby has jaundice.

To confirm your baby is jaundiced your midwife or GP can do a blood test that will show how much bilirubin is in the baby's body. Another blood test may be needed later.

Things to watch for

- Jaundice can cause sleepiness.
When the baby is awake he/she should be alert and active.
Normally your baby will wake every 2-4 hours for feeds during the day.
- Baby may have greenish/yellow coloured bowel motions because bilirubin is broken down to make a green/yellow coloured substance.
This is a good sign that baby is coping with jaundice.
- Once baby is five days old he/she should be having a wet nappy at most feed times.
- Jaundice is usually gone by 2-3 weeks.

Contact your midwife or GP:

- when your baby has jaundice and has **pale bowel motions**/dark urine
- baby has the above signs **AND** is **unwell** **contact your midwife/GP URGENTLY.**
- your baby is **older than 3 weeks and still has jaundice** it is important to tell your midwife/GP.

Jaundice cannot be prevented as it is normal and, for most babies, harmless.

But there are some ways you can help your baby to clear the jaundice.

If the midwife tells you that your baby has jaundice, you can help your baby by:

- Making sure the room is warm
- Take all baby's clothes off, except nappy
- Put the baby in a room that gets lots of bright day light, **not direct sunlight** babies sunburn very easily – by a window which is not covered by curtains, blinds or net curtains
- Baby can sleep like this for 1-2 hours between feeds, twice a day
- A good breastmilk intake helps baby to get rid of the bilirubin, you need to feed your baby at least every 3 hours

When will my baby need treatment?

Mild jaundice does not normally need any treatment.

This is called Phototherapy (PTU).