

How to Care for Jaundice in the Hospital

Jaundice

Jaundice causes your baby's skin and the whites of the eyes to turn yellow. Too much bilirubin in your baby's bloodstream causes jaundice. Bilirubin is a yellow substance that comes from the normal breakdown of red blood cells.

Caring for Jaundice in the Hospital

The best way to reduce jaundice is to feed your baby more often.

Whether you are breastfeeding or formula feeding, feed your baby 8 to 12 times each day for the first week. This will help your baby urinate and have bowel movements more often to help get rid of the bilirubin.



Family-centered phototherapy allows you, your partner or another family member to hold your baby while he or she is being treated for jaundice.

Phototherapy

If your baby needs more treatment, your baby's health care provider may want your baby to have phototherapy.

Phototherapy (light therapy) can help get rid of the bilirubin in your baby's blood.

Your baby may need this treatment in the hospital or at home for several days.

The special lights help break down the bilirubin so the body can get rid of it easier.

The lights will be brought to your hospital room and you will be shown how to use them.

Types of Phototherapy

Biliblanket

A biliblanket is a soft, flexible plastic blanket with tiny built-in blue lights. Your baby can be placed on the blanket or the blanket can be wrapped around your baby's abdomen.

Your baby can then be wrapped in another blanket to provide warmth. You can hold your baby while he or she is wrapped in the biliblanket.

Phototherapy lights

A machine with bili lights is placed above your baby. It allows light to shine directly on your baby. Light waves break down the bilirubin so your baby can get rid of it easier through urine and stools.

(over)

Using Phototherapy

- Your baby will need to be undressed down to the diaper so as much skin as possible is exposed to the light.
- Your baby will need to wear protective eyewear.
- Your baby needs to be under the lights as much as possible throughout the day and night (around the clock). Take your baby out only to feed or change a diaper. The longer your baby has the light shining on him or her, the faster your baby's bilirubin level will go down.
- The phototherapy lights will not keep your baby warm. Use another blanket or adjust the room temperature as needed for warmth and comfort.
- Keep a record of:
 - your baby's feedings and wet or soiled diapers
 - how long your baby is under or wrapped in the lights.
- Your baby's health care provider will:
 - check your baby
 - draw blood from your baby to check the bilirubin level
 - answer any questions.
- Your baby's health care provider will tell you when your baby can stop phototherapy.

Family-centered Phototherapy

While in the hospital, your health care provider may want your baby to have family-centered phototherapy.

This type of phototherapy allows you, your partner or another family member to hold your baby while he or she is being treated for jaundice.

The goal is to reduce the amount of time your baby needs to be treated by using phototherapy lights and a biliblanket at the same time.

You are encouraged to have your baby exposed to the lights as much as possible. You can hold your baby skin-to-skin during this time.

You and your baby will both need to wear protective eyewear during this treatment.