

How to Care for Jaundice at Home

Jaundice

Jaundice is the yellowing of your baby's skin, whites of the eyes and body. This is caused by extra bilirubin (the normal breakdown of red blood cells) in your baby's bloodstream.

Many infants will get jaundice. It typically reaches its highest level 3 to 5 days after birth. Most of the time jaundice is mild and does not need to be treated.

Caring for Jaundice at Home

The best way to decrease jaundice at home 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 and get rid of the bilirubin.

Phototherapy

If your baby needs more treatment, your baby's health care provider may want your baby to be placed under phototherapy lights. This can often be done at home.

Your baby may need this treatment 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 for you to take home or will be delivered to your home by your equipment supplier. In some locations, you will need to pick up the lights from your equipment supplier. You will be given instructions on how to use the lights.

Important

You should not put your baby in the sunlight as a way to give phototherapy — either outdoors or indoors. If placed in direct sunlight outdoors, your baby could become sunburned. If placed indoors without clothes, your baby could become cold.

Types of Phototherapy

There are three types of lights that can be used at home.

BiliBed®

A BiliBed has special tiny fluorescent blue lights that shine up from a mattress. Your baby will be placed on his or her back in a special blanket attached to the mattress. You can cover you baby with a blanket as needed for warmth.

Biliblanket

A biliblanket is a soft, flexible plastic blanket with tiny built-in fiber optic blue lights. It 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.

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BiliSoft™ Phototherapy System

A BiliSoft Phototherapy System is similar to a biliblanket, but is smaller and not as flexible. The blanket is laid along your baby's back and secured with ties in the front.

Your baby will need to wear protective eyewear when using the BiliSoft. The eyewear will come with the system. If the eyewear is too loose, put a snug-fitting baby cap on your baby's head to help keep it in place.

- Your baby can be held while using this phototherapy.
- A blanket should be placed around the BiliSoft and your baby to provide warmth and comfort.

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 needs to be under the lights as much as possible during the day and during the 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 a blanket as needed for warmth and comfort.
- Keep a record of:
 - your baby's feedings and wet or soiled diapers (including the color of the stools)
 - how long your baby is exposed to the lights.
- Your baby's health care provider may have a home care nurse come to your home that day after you and your baby leave the hospital. The nurse will:
 - check your baby
 - review your record
 - 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.
- When your baby is done with phototherapy, please call your equipment supplier. You will be given instructions on how to return the lights.