

## What is newborn jaundice?

After birth, baby's body naturally goes through many changes. The extra red blood cells that were needed to carry oxygen while inside mom are broken down after baby is born. This produces bilirubin, and can make baby's skin and eyes appear yellow. The yellow color moves down from head to toe as jaundice progresses. Jaundice usually peaks around baby's 3<sup>rd</sup> day and goes away by 2 to 3 weeks.

Babies that are born early, have bruising, an infection, or a blood group different from mom, *may have* increased jaundice. Bilirubin can get concentrated in baby's blood and brain. This can make baby sleepy and unable to feed well. If jaundice progresses and is not treated, this can become serious. All newborns are monitored for jaundice.

## How is my baby monitored?

You and your baby's health care providers will monitor your baby's color and behavior. This assessment, and a reading from a 'jaundice meter' when baby is about 24 hours old will guide further follow-up and treatment if needed.

## What is a jaundice meter?

The jaundice meter is a small instrument that, when gently pressed on baby's chest, a flash of light measures color through baby's skin. The meter provides an estimated bilirubin concentration that helps guide treatment.

## How can jaundice be minimized?

Generally, jaundice can be minimized with early, frequent, and effective feeding. Keep baby warm and close to your skin. This is how you learn to follow baby's feeding cues. If baby is not rooting for the breast, ask for help expressing your milk for baby. The fluids and energy from breastmilk help flush the bilirubin out of baby's system.

Rarely, a 'biliblanket' may be used to expose the skin to special light that helps break down the bilirubin in the skin. Baby improves as bilirubin levels go down and activity level increases. Follow care as directed by Doctor.

## When do I call baby's Doctor?

Contact your health care provider or the Saskatchewan Health Line if your baby is too drowsy to wake to feed, is feeding poorly, has a high pitched cry, has a fever or jaundice improves but then comes back, or if you have questions or concerns about your baby's health.

**Healthy & Home**

**306-655-4858**

**Breastfeeding Center**

**306-655-4806**

**Health Line**

**1-877-800-002  
or dial 811**

**[caringforkids.caps.ca/  
babies/jaundice.htm](http://caringforkids.caps.ca/babies/jaundice.htm)**