

## **Prolonged Jaundiced Screening Information for Parents**

### **What is Jaundice?**

Jaundice is the name given to the yellow colouration of the skin and to the whites of the eyes. Jaundice is not a liver disease and does not necessarily mean your baby is ill.

### **Why do Babies become Jaundiced?**

In the womb, a baby's waste products are removed by the placenta. Once born, their own body (liver) has to do this. It can take some time for their body to effectively remove certain products, so there becomes a build-up. Bilirubin is one of these products.

### **What is Bilirubin?**

The body continually makes new red blood cells and breaks down old ones. The breakdown of these red blood cells produces bilirubin. Because a baby is born with extra red blood cells, they have more to break down. The liver can take a few days to work properly, so the bilirubin stays in their bloodstream a little longer, making their skin appear yellow.

### **Is Jaundice Common in Newborn Babies?**

Jaundice is one of the most common conditions in newborn babies; approximately 60% of term and 80% of preterm babies will develop jaundice in the first week of life and about 10% of breastfed babies are still jaundiced at one month of age.

For most babies, this early jaundice (or 'physiological jaundice') is not a sign of underlying disease and gradually disappears in most babies by two weeks of age. However, if your baby appears to still be jaundiced at 2 weeks of age, further assessment is required to decide if further treatment is needed. There can be several reasons as to why your baby remains jaundiced, such as prematurity, breastfeeding jaundice or possibly an infection. Liver problems are rare.

### **Stool and Urine Colour is Important**

- The urine of a newborn baby should be colourless.
- The stools of a breastfed baby should be green/daffodil yellow.
- The stools of a bottle fed baby should be green/ English mustard yellow.

### **What is the Prolonged Jaundice Screen?**

If your baby appears jaundiced at 14 days of age, they will be referred to the hospital for a blood test, called the prolonged jaundice screen. This screening is carried out at either Poole, Dorchester Salisbury or Yeovil hospital depending on your location and involves obtaining a urine and blood sample from your baby.

### **What happens when you go to the Ward?**

- On arrival to Kingfisher Ward (Dorchester, contact number: 01305 254253), Children's Assessment Unit (Poole, contact number: 01202 442613), Beatrice Postnatal Ward

(Salisbury, contact number: 01722 425184) or Freya Postnatal Ward (Yeovil, contact number: 01935 384303) you will be greeted by a member of staff.

- A room or bedside with a cot will be prepared for you.
- The nurse will ask a few questions about your baby's birth, health and any relevant family history.
- A small amount of blood will be taken for the screen from the back of your baby's hand. You may wish to breastfeed your baby, or bring a bottle if formula feeding.
- Alternatively, your baby can be given a sucrose solution (sugary liquid) by drops into the mouth. There is a solid evidence base that shows how this can lower potential pain from the procedure for your baby.
- A clean urine sample will be obtained on the day. This can take time, so to help reduce your time spent on the ward, you may prefer to obtain a specimen at home before coming in. This can be done by ensuring your baby has a clean nappy area, by placing your baby on a changing mat and waiting for them to empty their bladder. You can obtain a sample by quickly placing a pot in position, although this can understandably be difficult! This specimen will only be suitable for testing if caught up to an hour before the appointment.
- **TIP:** to encourage them to go, try dropping a little cold water from a cotton wool ball onto the baby's nappy area. Be ready with the pot!
- Please be aware, the children's wards are emergency day care wards, therefore you may have a little wait.
- You will be free to leave the ward as soon as the tests are complete.

### **What happens after the Screening?**

The results are seen by a member of staff the same day and are then reviewed by the consultant.

- You will be contacted within 8 days by telephone if further tests are needed.
- Or
- A letter is sent to you to say the results are satisfactory
  - If your baby is still jaundiced at 6-8 weeks, your GP will need to refer your baby back to the hospital.

[Yellow Alert](#) app provides further information about prolonged jaundice.

Please feel free to speak to any member of staff on the ward if you have further questions, or you can speak to your Health Visitor.

Dorset Health Visiting Services. Edited April 2020.

Authors: Serena Hunter, Student Health Visitor, Kathy Hawkins, Health Visitor

Contributor: Lucy Buckingham, Student Nurse

Editors: Lucy Crouch, Student Health Visitor, Lisa Drury, Student Health Visitor, Sophie Dunning, Student Health Visitor, Alice Lovell, Student Health Visitor and Charlotte Tromans, Student Health Visitor

### References

Children's Liver Disease Foundation., 2019. *Jaundice Protocol – Early identification and referral of liver disease in infants* [online]. Birmingham: Children's Liver Disease Foundation.

National Institute of Health and Care Excellence, NICE., 2016. *Jaundice in newborn babies under 28 days* [online]. London: National Institute of Health and Care Excellence.