

Your baby will be cared for in an incubator and will only wear a nappy to make sure that the majority of their skin is exposed.

The treatment may last a couple of days. Your babies blood will be tested regularly to check the bilirubin levels and ensure that the phototherapy is working. Your babies treatment will be stopped once the bilirubin level has dropped to a normal limits and remains low.



### Useful information

Midwifery Service – Telephone: 0151 495 5079

**Local Community Pharmacy** - Your local community pharmacies offer a wide range of services including information and general advice on symptom relief medicines as well as a prescription collection and delivery service.

For impartial and confidential advice or information on the services provided by Bridgewater or to receive this leaflet in an alternative format call our Patient Services team on 0800 587 0562.

 [www.twitter.com/Bridgewater\\_NHS](https://www.twitter.com/Bridgewater_NHS)

 [www.facebook.com/BridgewaterNHS](https://www.facebook.com/BridgewaterNHS)

Visit our website at: [www.bridgewater.nhs.uk](http://www.bridgewater.nhs.uk)

## Bridgewater Midwifery Services

### Information about jaundice in newborn babies



## Background

Jaundice in newborn babies is common. It causes a yellow coloured tinge to the skin and a yellowing of the whites of the eyes. You may notice it when your baby is two-three days old and in most cases this is the result of the baby adjusting to life outside your womb.

If your baby becomes jaundiced in the first 24 hours there may be different reasons and tests that are needed to find the cause.

## What causes jaundice?

Babies need a higher amount of red blood cells before birth to carry oxygen around the body. Once your baby is born the additional red blood cells are no longer needed and are broken down by enzymes produced by the liver. This breakdown produces a waste substance known as bilirubin which is a yellow colour.

Normally the liver picks up bilirubin and it is filtered by the kidneys and passed out in the urine/stool. This process is sometimes slower in newborn babies as a result of the liver being under-developed and not fully functional.

Babies are more likely to have increased levels of jaundice if they:

- Are born prematurely
- Have had a ventouse or forceps delivery
- Suffer bruising during birth
- Have a sibling who needed phototherapy.

There are other jaundice related conditions that are rare. You will be advised if further tests are needed.

Breast milk jaundice can last up to three months and is not harmful, although tests may be necessary to make sure there is no other cause.

## Why do we need to treat jaundice?

If the bilirubin level in the blood becomes very high a condition called kernicterus can develop. This means that the bilirubin affects the developing brain. Babies can have fits and sometimes be left with brain damage.

## How is jaundice treated?

In most cases jaundice in newborn babies is nothing to worry about. It does not need treatment and usually disappears after a week.

If the jaundice worsens your baby will be referred to the hospital where a small sample of blood will be taken from your baby's heel. Your baby may need a treatment in hospital called phototherapy if the level of bilirubin is high.

## What is phototherapy?

Phototherapy is a blue light that is shone onto your baby's skin. This helps to speed up the breakdown of the pigments in their skin and changes bilirubin into a substance which can be passed out in your babies urine and stools.

Phototherapy is a bit like sunbathing. A shield is put on to protect your babies eyes and they will be given extra fluid to prevent them from dehydration.