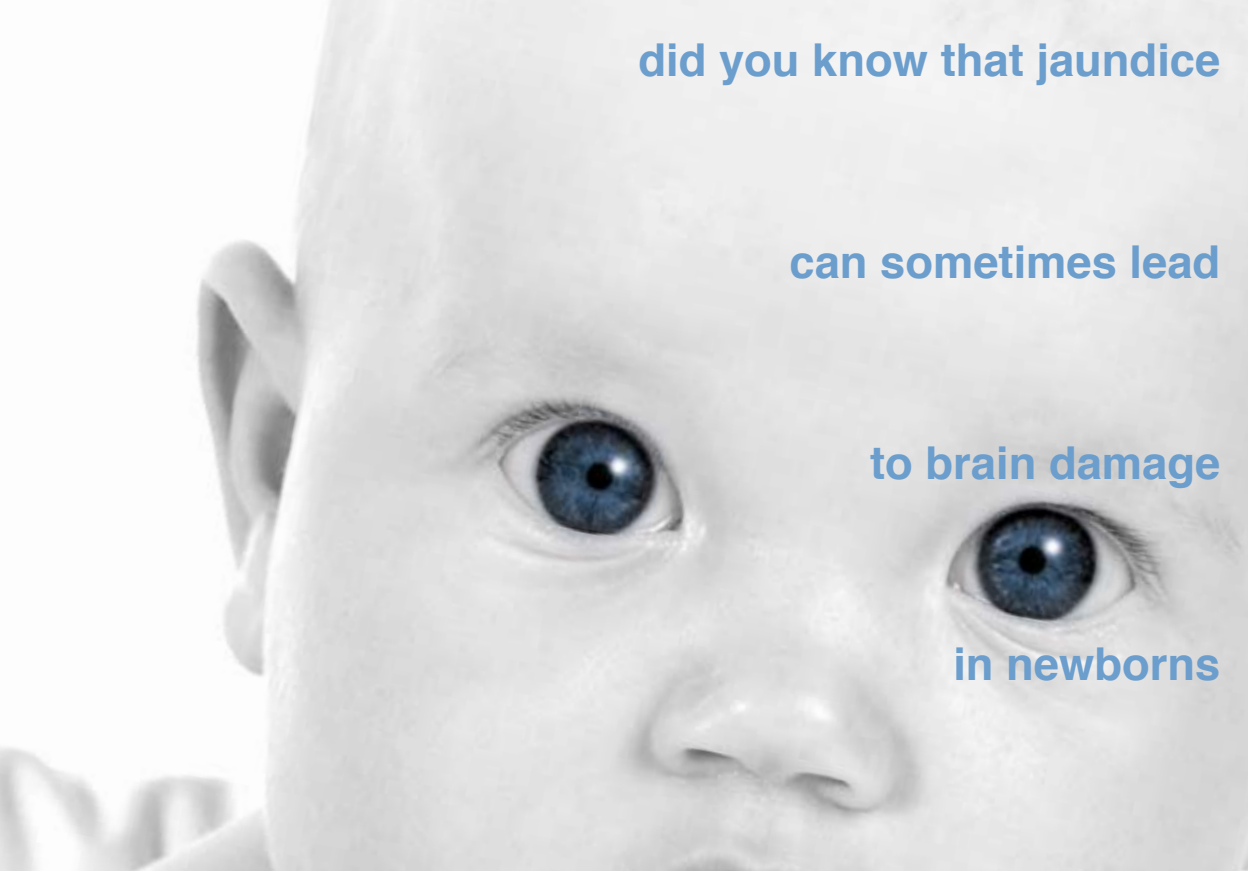
If you'd like to know more, please call 1-800-CDC-INFO




Your Guide to Newborn Jaundice Safety

# What is Newborn Jaundice?

Jaundice is caused by high levels of bilirubin, a natural substance that can build up in a baby's blood and skin.

- All babies are at risk for developing newborn jaundice
- 60% of newborn infants develop jaundice
- 1 in 10 newborns will need treatment. Most treatment is easy, low-cost, and painless
- If jaundice is not checked for and treated properly, high levels of bilirubin can cause brain damage resulting in a life-long condition called kernicterus
- Although most babies with jaundice will be fine, you should learn about jaundice and work with your doctor or nurse to keep your baby safe and healthy
- **Most importantly, ask your doctor or nurse about a jaundice bilirubin test**

## How is my baby's jaundice treated?

If your baby has high bilirubin levels, your doctor or nurse might suggest increasing feeding, or phototherapy treatment. With phototherapy your baby will need to lie under special blue lights in the hospital or at home. **Putting your baby in the sun is not a safe way to treat jaundice!**

# How to Use This Guide

This guide will tell you what you need to know – and do – to make sure your baby has a safer experience with newborn jaundice. It is divided into three main sections:

- Before your baby is born
- Before you take your baby home from the hospital
- Your first few days at home

Each section has easy-to-follow information and checklists for you to complete and share with your doctor.

# Before Your Baby is Born

## Early Risk Factors Checklist
### Is my baby likely to have jaundice?

*Check if it is true:*

- ❑ Baby has Mediterranean, Middle-Eastern or East-Asian ethnicity
- ❑ Baby has a brother or sister who had jaundice
- ❑ Baby's mother's blood type is O and/or Rh negative

## Take Action
### What should I do?

Talk with your doctor or nurse about any boxes you checked, but remember that any baby can develop jaundice.

## Ask your baby's doctor or nurse about a jaundice bilirubin test

Whether you checked off any risk factors or not, talk to your doctor or nurse about a jaundice bilirubin test. It is the best way to know whether your baby will need treatment.

# Before You Take Your Baby Home from the Hospital

## Risk Factors Checklist

**Is my baby likely to need treatment for jaundice?** *Check if it is true:*

- ☐ Baby born before due date
- ☐ Baby has jaundice within 24 hours after birth
- ☐ Baby is having a hard time breastfeeding
- ☐ Baby has bruises
  Where?_____
- ☐ Baby has a different blood type than mother

## Take Action

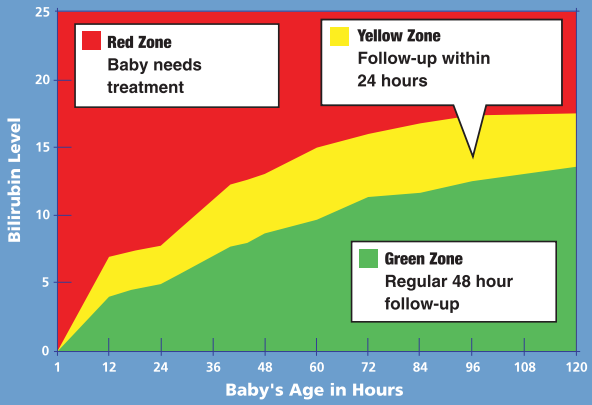
**What should I do?**

1) Talk with your baby's doctor or nurse about any of the things you checked.
2) If you are having trouble breastfeeding, work with your doctor and nurse to get the help you need.
3) Ask your baby's doctor or nurse about a jaundice bilirubin test. It's important to ask about this test before you take your baby home from the hospital.
4) Make a follow-up appointment. All babies should have a follow-up appointment within 48 hours after they go home from the hospital.

   Appointment Date and Time:

   _____
5) Ask your doctor to explain results from the jaundice bilirubin test and how to track it on the nomogram.

## Bilirubin Nomogram



# Your First Few Days at Home

## Home Checklist

### Is my baby having problems related to jaundice?

*Check if it is true:*

- ☐ Baby is having a hard time feeding (be sure to ask your doctor or nurse for help with breastfeeding)
- ☐ Baby is hard to wake up, even to feed
- ☐ Baby has fewer than four wet or dirty diapers within 24 hours
- ☐ Baby just can't be comforted
- ☐ Baby is arching back or neck
- ☐ Baby's cry sounds more shrill

## Track number of wet or dirty diapers

Use the chart to the right to track the number of wet or dirty diapers each day. This will make it easy to tell if your baby is not getting enough milk. If there are fewer than four wet or dirty diapers in any 24-hour period, talk with your doctor or nurse right away.

## Take Action

### What should I do?

1) Talk with your baby's doctor or nurse about any of the boxes you've checked.
2) Be sure to go for your follow-up appointment within 48 hours of bringing your baby home from the hospital.

***If you're worried about your baby, trust your instincts. Call or visit a doctor or nurse right away.***

| Day 1 | Day 2 | Day 3 | Day 4 | Day 5 | Day 6 | Day 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ① ② ③ ④ | ① ② ③ ④ | ① ② ③ ④ | ① ② ③ ④ | ① ② ③ ④ | ① ② ③ ④ | ① ② ③ ④ |

# Enjoy This Special Time

Congratulations!
Reading this guide is an important first step to helping your baby have a safer experience with newborn jaundice. Be sure to talk to your doctor or nurse if you have any more questions. Remember to take this guide with you to the hospital – and to use it.

**If you'd like to know more, please call 1-800-CDC-INFO.**

## More Resources

**Search the following sites for key words *jaundice* and *kernicterus***

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov

Parents of Infants and Children with Kernicterus
www.pickonline.org

BiliTool Web
www.bilitool.org

American Academy of Pediatrics
www.aap.org

National Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition
www.hmhb.org

Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses
www.awhonn.org

Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations
www.jointcommission.org