

## Contact Telephone Numbers

Neonatal Unit, Lister Hospital      01438 284125  
Children's Emergency Department    01438 284606

## Further Information

For more information see the Bliss Baby Charity website at:

[www.bliss.org.uk](http://www.bliss.org.uk)

Bliss helpline telephone number: 0808 801 0322

or email: [hello@bliss.org.uk](mailto:hello@bliss.org.uk)

# Information for Parents

## Jaundice

### Neonatal Unit

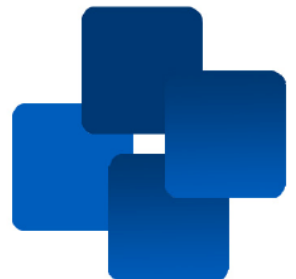
## Reference

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/jaundice-newborn](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/jaundice-newborn)

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[www.enherts-tr.nhs.uk](http://www.enherts-tr.nhs.uk)

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## What is Jaundice?

Jaundice is a common condition in newborn babies. It causes yellowing in the skin and the whites of the eyes, usually on the second to fifth day after birth.

Jaundice is caused by a build up of a normal chemical in the blood, called bilirubin. Before birth, the mother's liver removes bilirubin for the baby. After birth the baby's liver takes over, however, sometimes it takes a few days for the liver to work properly and the baby may develop jaundice in this time. As a result, excess bilirubin remains in the body causing a yellow tinge to the skin and whites of the eyes.

## How is it treated?

**Jaundice is a very treatable condition.** A blood sample is usually taken from the baby's heel to measure the bilirubin levels. If the levels are low, no treatment will be needed.

If the levels are raised, checks will first be made to ensure your baby's fluid intake is enough. Light therapy may also be used. This is called 'phototherapy' and consists of placing the baby under a light source or on top of a light blanket.

This special blue light helps in breaking down the bilirubin, which is then passed out of the body in the baby's urine. Your baby will be placed under the light naked, so that as much of the skin as possible can benefit from the light. Your baby's eyes will be protected with eye pads.

Repeat blood levels will be taken until normal levels are present.

## Monitoring of your baby whilst receiving phototherapy

Your baby's progress will be continuously monitored by the nursing and medical staff, which includes checking:

- Temperature;
- Skin colour and integrity;
- Bilirubin (SBR) levels;
- Feeding;
- Amount of wet and dirty nappies.

## How parents can support their baby

Once your baby is settled under phototherapy lights, you will be able to cuddle him/her and assist with their cares and nappy changes.

## What are the potential complications of Jaundice?

In the majority of cases jaundice has no lasting complications for your baby.

After treatment, if bilirubin levels continue to be raised, further tests will be necessary to find out why. This can be due to a number of causes, including a urinary tract infection, low levels of certain hormones and breast milk jaundice (although this usually resolves in about six weeks after birth).

If the levels of bilirubin become too high, there is a risk of damage to the brain called 'bilirubin encephalopathy', also known as kernicterus. This can cause both short and long-term problems.

Treatment for this is an emergency procedure which involves an exchange transfusion, where the baby's blood is replaced with new blood from a donor.

Although neonatal jaundice is very common, kernicterus is extremely rare.

## More questions?

If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to the doctors or nursing staff.