

# Jaundice of the Newborn

## *Brief Version*

### **What is jaundice?**

Jaundice is when your new baby has yellow looking skin. The whites of your baby's eyes may be yellow.

This happens for these reasons:

- **Normal jaundice.** The baby's liver just isn't ready yet to get rid of the yellow pigment called bilirubin on its own. This type of jaundice starts when the baby is 2 or 3 days old. It goes away by the time your baby is 2 weeks old. This happens in about half of all babies.
- **Breast-feeding jaundice** happens when your baby does not drink enough breast milk.
- **Breast-milk jaundice** does not happen very often. It starts when the baby is 4 to 7 days old. It may last 3 to 10 weeks.
- **Rh or ABO problems.** This serious type of jaundice most often starts the first day of life.

### **How can I help my baby with breast-feeding or breast-milk jaundice?**

Breast-feed more often. This can help lower the bilirubin.

- Nurse your baby every 1-and-1/2 to 2-and-1/2 hours.
- If your baby sleeps more than 4 hours at night, awaken him for a feeding.

### **Call your baby's doctor right away if:**

- You think your baby is not getting enough fluid.
- Your baby has jaundice during the first 24 hours of life.
- Your baby looks deep yellow or orange.
- Your baby hasn't urinated in more than 8 hours.
- Your baby gets a fever.
- Your baby also starts to look or act sick.

### **Call your baby's doctor during office hours if:**

- Your baby looks deep yellow or orange.
- Your baby is not getting enough milk or gaining weight well.
- Your baby has fewer than three good-sized BMs per day.
- Your baby has fewer than six wet diapers per day.
- The jaundice is not gone by day 14.
- You have other concerns or questions.

Written by B.D. Schmitt, M.D., author of "Your Child's Health," Bantam Books.

This content is reviewed periodically and is subject to change as new health information becomes available. The information is intended to inform and educate and is not a replacement for medical evaluation, advice, diagnosis or treatment by a healthcare professional.