

Prolonged Jaundice

Information for parents and carers

Your baby has been referred to us for a prolonged jaundice test. This is done by taking a small sample of blood from the heel on your baby's foot. Bloods are then delivered to the hospital laboratory to determine the level of jaundice of your baby.

What is prolonged jaundice?

Jaundice is caused by the build-up of a dark yellow substance called bilirubin. This is a natural waste product of the normal breakdown of red blood cells. Before birth, the mother's liver removes this product, but after birth the baby's liver must get rid of it on its own.

However, the liver is still immature in newborns, so it is less efficient at clearing waste products. These can build up in the skin and gives the appearance of yellow on the skin (jaundice).

Jaundice usually appears after 2-3 days and gradually disappears on its own by day 14. However, jaundice can often last longer, especially in some breastfed babies or preterm babies.

Why does my baby have prolonged jaundice?

Prolonged jaundice is usually related to breastmilk feeding and is harmless. In this case, jaundice will disappear in the coming weeks, and you should continue breastfeeding your baby.

Very rarely prolonged jaundice can be a sign of a liver disease or other uncommon disorders. This is very uncommon but must be investigated so that treatment may be given if required.

What to expect if your baby remains jaundiced

Full-term babies who remain jaundiced after 14 days and preterm babies after 21 days will be assessed by your midwife or health visitor.

If your baby is still jaundiced at 4 weeks old, they will be referred to check the level of bilirubin in the blood.

What is the blood test for?

The blood is sent to the laboratory for a split bilirubin test. The test measures the ratio of the conjugated and unconjugated bilirubin level in your baby's blood. This test will indicate whether the cause is liver related.

When to seek help (red flags)?

- Check the colour of your baby's poo

The poo of breastfed baby should be green/daffodil yellow colour

The poo of a bottle-fed baby should be green/english mustard colour

You can visit the link or scan the QR code here to compare the colour of healthy stools and suspected stools:



www.childliverdisease.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Yellow-Alert-Stool-Chart-Bookmark.pdf

If your baby's poo looks pale or chalky you must report this to the midwife or health visitor immediately. It could be a sign of liver disease.

- Check the colour of your baby's urine. Look out for dark urine
- Check the whites of the eyes if its noticeably yellow
- Poor feeding / poor growth
- Swollen tummy
- Rash or bruising

Does prolonged jaundice require treatment?

Babies with jaundice due to breastmilk or prematurity will not require treatment, and the jaundice will disappear over coming weeks. You should not stop breastfeeding.

If test shows that your baby has another reason for jaundice, then the treatment depends on the cause.

When will I get the results?

You will be contacted by the medical team when the blood results are available. If you have not heard from us by 9:15pm on the day of your baby's test, please call the Neonatal Unit on **0131 242 2601** and ask for the Neonatal Registrar who will be able to discuss the results with you.