

Patient Information for Prolonged Jaundice

What is jaundice?

Jaundice means a yellow colour to the skin and may be first noticed in the whites of the eyes.

Jaundice is very common and occurs in approximately half of normal, healthy babies in their first week. It usually occurs at day 2-3 of life.

What causes jaundice?

Before they are born, babies need more blood cells to carry oxygen around the body. After they are born the extra blood cells are broken down. This produces a yellow pigment called Bilirubin which their body needs to remove in their urine. In a new baby this process is sometimes slower and the Bilirubin builds up, making the baby look yellow.

Babies who are breast fed can also be jaundiced for longer than bottle fed babies. If your baby is healthy and thriving, this is normal.

Babies who have some bruising at birth and those who are born a little earlier are also more prone to jaundice.

What is prolonged jaundice?

This is jaundice which continues after your baby is 2 weeks old or 3 weeks if they are born early (before 37 weeks gestation).

In rare cases there is another reason for the prolonged jaundice and this is why your baby has been sent for investigations (tests).

What tests will my baby need?

A clinician will ask you some questions about your pregnancy, birth and baby's feeding; weigh and examine your baby.

Your baby will then have some blood tests. This will measure the Bilirubin level and blood count.

What happens now?

The results will be available the same or next day.

If your baby is well you can take your baby home and they can be seen by your GP or midwife if needed.

We will contact you earlier if any of the results are abnormal. If all results are normal we will send you a letter.