

Prolonged Neonatal Jaundice

This leaflet offers more information about prolonged neonatal jaundice. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to the staff member in charge of your baby's care.

What is prolonged jaundice and why has my baby got it?

A baby with jaundice will have a yellow colouring of their skin and the whites of their eyes. This is very common in newborns. Jaundice is caused when the baby's blood has raised levels of something called bilirubin, which is a normal waste product usually removed by the liver.

Bilirubin levels just after birth build up too fast for the liver to filter it all out and jaundice then occurs. Jaundice is prolonged when it lasts for more than 14 days in babies born on time or more than 21 days in babies born early.

For most babies, there is no illness causing their prolonged jaundice. It is more common in babies who are breast fed and, although it is not known why this is, it is harmless. This is called "breast milk jaundice".

What are the signs and symptoms?

The whites of your baby's eyes and often their skin will appear yellow.

Does my baby need any tests to confirm the diagnosis?

Prolonged jaundice is generally breast milk jaundice but it can **rarely** mean there is a blood problem, infection, thyroid problem or liver disease. Liver disease must be treated quickly, so it is important to catch it early.

To rule out liver disease, we will ask questions, examine your baby and do some blood tests. We will then look for the type of jaundice and for other possible causes.

If there is nothing that needs to be acted upon quickly, the test results will be posted to your GP and you will be sent a copy. You should get this within two weeks.

Is there anything I can do to help my baby?

You can safely continue breastfeeding your baby. Even if your baby is jaundiced, breastfeeding has lots of benefits for baby and mum, so we strongly encourage you to keep doing it.

What treatments are available?

Most babies with prolonged jaundice don't need any treatment. The jaundice is harmless and usually wears off by 12-16 weeks of age.

If your baby's tests show that there may be a problem, we will contact you to let you know. Your baby may then need more blood tests and may be referred to the specialist liver centre at King's College Hospital. We will discuss this with you so that you know what is going to happen and what it all means.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about prolonged neonatal jaundice, please contact the Blue Sky Centre, Monday to Friday 9am to 8pm on 020 8725 0650 stating the date you were seen in the Blue Sky Centre.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings (near the lift foyer).

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

Web: www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

Tel: 111

AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all of our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website (www.accessable.co.uk). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.

