

Prolonged Neonatal Jaundice

This leaflet provides 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. The yellow colour is caused by raised levels of a substance called bilirubin within your baby's blood. Bilirubin is a normal waste product usually removed by the liver. Just after birth, bilirubin can build up too quickly for the liver to filter it all out, in which case jaundice occurs. This is a very common condition in the newborn.

Jaundice is termed '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. Prolonged jaundice occurs in both breast fed and formula fed babies. It is known to be more common in babies who are breast fed and is sometimes referred to as "breastmilk 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?

Most prolonged jaundice occurs in healthy babies with no underlying illness. However, rarely it can mean there is a blood problem, an

infection or a problem with the thyroid or liver. Liver disease must be treated quickly, so it is important to catch it early.

To rule out these other causes, we will ask questions about you and your baby. A clinician will examine your baby and do a blood test. You will be called with the results of the blood test the next day and a copy of these results will also be sent to you and your GP.

Is there anything I can do to help my baby?

If you are breastfeeding your baby, continuing to feed regularly is both safe and will help the jaundice to resolve. Breastfeeding has lots of benefits for baby and mum, so we strongly encourage you to continue. There is usually no need to supplement with water or formula milk. Please speak to the infant Feeding Team if you feel you need support with breastfeeding.

What treatments are available?

Most babies with prolonged jaundice do not require any treatment. The jaundice is harmless and usually wears off by 12 to 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.

Useful sources of information

NHS conditions

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/jaundice-newborn/>

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.

The Infant Feeding Team is available Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm and can be contacted on 07766 800 365 or 020 8725 0199 (answering machine).

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 advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or care. You can contact the PALS team on the advisory telephone line Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 2pm to 5pm.

A Walk-in service is available:
Monday, Tuesday and Thursday between 10am and 4pm
Friday between 10am and 2pm.

Please contact PALS in advance to check if there are any changes to opening times.
The Walk-in and Advisory telephone services are closed on Wednesdays.

PALS is based within the hospital in the ground floor main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings.

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

NHS UK

The NHS 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 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.



Reference: PED_PRJ_LP_06 **Published:** November 2024 **Review date:** November 2026