

## **Pediatric Jaundice**

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### **DEFINITION**

Jaundice most commonly describes a condition caused by the build-up of a substance called bilirubin. Bilirubin is the by-product of normal red-blood-cell breakdown. The bilirubin passes out of the body through the stool. Sometimes in newborns, the liver has not matured enough to handle bilirubin. Jaundice is a common condition in newborn infants that may develop shortly after birth. In most cases, it goes away on its own. Too much bilirubin makes a baby's skin look yellow. This yellow color will appear first on the face, then on the chest and stomach, and finally on the legs.

### **SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF JAUNDICE**

Observe your baby for signs of jaundice or worsening of any jaundice he or she had in the hospital. The amount of yellow is best determined by viewing your baby undressed in natural sunlight by a window. To test for jaundice, press your finger on the tip of your child's nose or forehead. If the skin looks white (this is true for babies of all races) there is no jaundice. If you notice a yellow discoloration, press gently on your child's chest and lower abdomen. If you see a yellowish color in the lower abdomen, contact your child's physician to determine if your baby has jaundice.

### **TREATMENT AND CARE**

If you notice that your baby has a yellow discoloration:

- Feed more frequently - More frequent feedings of breast milk or formula helps pass the bilirubin out in the stools.
- "Sun bathe" your baby - You may place your baby with as much skin exposed as possible near a sunny window for 10 to 15 minutes twice a day. Sunlight helps to break down bilirubin. Be careful to monitor your baby's temperature, because he or she may become too warm or too cool.

### **CONSIDER NOTIFYING YOUR PHYSICIAN IF:**

- Jaundice develops during the first 48 hours of life
- Jaundice involves the lower abdomen
- Your baby develops a fever or a below normal temperature
- Your baby is difficult to awaken
- Your baby starts acting sick
- Jaundice is not gone in 14 days
- Your baby does not feed well
- You have concerns about the amount of jaundice.