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Jaundice & Breastfeeding

More than half of newborns are jaundiced during their first week. Jaundice is not a disease. It is a common condition that is usually harmless and goes away quickly.

What is jaundice?

A condition when your baby's skin and eyes look yellow. This yellow color is first seen in the face then moves to the chest and belly. As the levels, get higher, it may spread to the arms and legs. Jaundice may be hard to see if your baby has dark skin.

Is jaundice common?

Jaundice occurs in 50-75% of full-term babies and 75% of preterm babies. Your health care provider will check your baby's skin and eyes to see if she is jaundice. If your baby is jaundice, her blood levels may be checked to see what her bilirubin level is. If her bilirubin level is high, treatment for jaundice may be recommended.

Why is my baby jaundiced?

Jaundice occurs when there is extra bilirubin in the blood. We all have bilirubin in our blood from the breakdown of old red blood cells. During pregnancy, your baby makes extra red blood cells to support her oxygen needs. After birth, the extra red blood cells break down and release bilirubin into the blood. The liver filters the extra bilirubin out of the blood. This extra bilirubin leaves your baby's body through meconium or stools.

Is jaundice harmful for my baby?

If your baby's blood levels are high, jaundice can be harmful. Very high levels left untreated can cause brain damage, a condition called kernicterus. If your baby has high levels, it is important to follow your health care provider's recommendations for treatment to lower your baby's bilirubin levels.

Is there anything I can do to prevent jaundice?

Yes. The more your baby breastfeeds, the more she takes in and the more she will stool. This will help get rid of the extra bilirubin. So, breastfeed soon after birth and 8-10x each 24-hour period.

Normal Frequency & Color of Stools of Breastfed Infants

Day	# of Stools	Color
1-2	1+	Black
3-4	3+	Green
5+	3-4+	Yellow

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