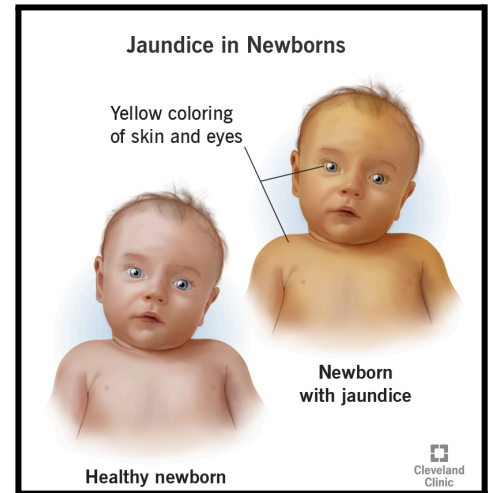


What is Jaundice in Newborns and Why it Matters:

Jaundice is a common condition in newborns where the skin and the whites of the eyes turn yellow. This yellowing is caused by an excess of bilirubin in the baby's blood. **Bilirubin** (yellow pigment) is a waste product of expired red blood cells in our bloodstream.

When red blood cells complete their life cycles, the liver breaks them down and passes out from our intestines. Newborn babies often experience Jaundice because their livers are not fully developed and may have difficulty processing bilirubin efficiently. Excess amounts of bilirubin can be toxic and lead to jaundice.

**Harmful effects of Neonatal Jaundice:**

While Neonatal Jaundice is usually not serious and resolves on its own, high levels of bilirubin could lead to brain damage. If left untreated, severe jaundice can lead to complications such as hearing loss, cerebral palsy and intellectual disabilities. Hence it is important to consult a doctor when the early signs appear in newborn children.

Symptoms of Neonatal Jaundice:

The primary symptoms of Jaundice in babies appear within the first few days of life. These include:

- Baby not feeding well
- Excessive sleepiness
- High-pitched crying
- Dark urine
- Pale or clay-coloured stools

Neonatal Jaundice is diagnosed through physical examinations, blood tests and press tests (where the skin is pressed to see if it appears yellow). The American Academy of Pediatrics uses a newborn jaundice level chart to determine if a baby requires treatment. This chart shows the baby's total serum bilirubin level and age.

Total serum bilirubin (TSB) level	Age of newborn
Above 10 milligrams	Less than 24 hours old
Above 15 milligrams	24 to 48 hours old
Above 18 milligrams	49 to 72 hours old
Above 20 milligrams	Older than 72 hours.

Source: [Cleveland Clinic](#)

Risk factors for developing Neonatal Jaundice:

Jaundice can affect any newborn, but certain physiological or pathological factors can increase your baby’s risk of developing Jaundice:

- Premature birth (born before 38 weeks)
- Significant bruising during birth due to difficult or prolonged deliveries
- Blood type incompatibility between mother and baby
- Breastfeeding difficulties
- Siblings who had severe Jaundice; family history
- Babies born to Diabetic mothers

Treatment Plan for Neonatal Jaundice:

Treatment for Neonatal Jaundice depends on the severity of the condition. Mild cases often resolve without treatment. For more severe cases, treatments include:

- **Phototherapy:** The baby is placed under special lights that help break down bilirubin in the skin.
- **Exchange transfusion:** In extreme cases, the baby's blood is replaced with fresh blood to reduce bilirubin levels quickly.

Prevention:

You cannot prevent Neonatal Jaundice because some risk factors are unavoidable. But there are some steps parents can take to help reduce the chances of severe Jaundice:

- **Proper prenatal care:** Ensure good prenatal care to prevent conditions that may lead to jaundice.
- **Vaccination:** Make sure your baby receives the Hepatitis B vaccine series, which typically includes three doses. The first dose should be given within 24 hours of birth.
- **Frequent feeding:** Ensure that the baby is nourished frequently with breastmilk or formula milk (if the baby is not breastfeeding). This ensures the baby stays hydrated and encourages regular bowel movements, which help excrete bilirubin.
- **Sunlight exposure:** Provide brief periods mainly 2-3 times a day of sunlight exposure in the early morning or late afternoon when UV levels are naturally lower. Do not expose the baby to direct sunlight.
- **Monitoring:** Keep an eye on the baby's symptoms and get regular check-ups during the first few days of life.

It is advisable to see a doctor when the early signs of Neonatal Jaundice appear in the newborn child. The doctor will be able to advise how to treat the condition.

To know more:

- [Types of Jaundice in Babies](#)
- [Cause of Jaundice in Babies](#)
- [What is Bilirubin and its role in the human body](#)