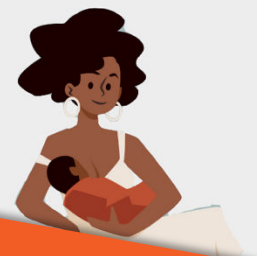


Jaundice and Breastfeeding



Jaundice is a common condition that causes a baby's skin and white parts of the eyes to turn yellow. This comes from an elevated level of bilirubin. Bilirubin is a product from the normal breakdown of red blood cells. Newborns have a shorter lifespan of red blood cells compared to adults and immature liver function with slower metabolism of bilirubin. Most newborns have "physiologic jaundice" which is harmless. Bilirubin has positive antioxidant effects in the newborn, but very high levels can cause brain damage.

If your baby has jaundice, their bilirubin levels will be monitored by your pediatrician. If their bilirubin levels are high, different levels of care can be provided. Some babies require phototherapy (light treatment), to eliminate bilirubin in the blood. Your baby's pediatrician may recommend supplementing your baby with bottles of expressed milk or formula in combination with breastfeeding. Rarely, your pediatrician may recommend temporary interruption of breastfeeding. If this is necessary, you can express and store your milk and resume breastfeeding when your baby's bilirubin level has decreased.

To help prevent jaundice in your baby initiate breastfeeding as soon as possible after birth, preferably in the first hour of life. Early frequent breastfeeding helps the baby to eliminate bilirubin in their stool. Your newborn should breastfeed 8 to 12 times per day. You may need to wake your baby every 2 to 3 hours to feed.

If you're having a difficult time breastfeeding your baby with jaundice, seek additional assistance from one of our lactation providers.

