

Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)

If you have a question, compliment, comment or concern  
please contact our PALS team on 020 7288 5551 or  
[whh-tr.whithealthPALS@nhs.net](mailto:whh-tr.whithealthPALS@nhs.net)

If you need a large print, audio or translated copy of this leaflet  
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meet your needs.

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## Hospital @ Home Nurse Led Phototherapy Service for Parents with an Islington GP A Parent's Guide



## What is jaundice?

Jaundice is the yellow colouring of your baby's skin and the whites of the eyes. It is very common in new-born babies.

## What causes it?

It is caused by a waste substance in the blood called bilirubin. Bilirubin is formed when red blood cells are broken up. The liver then normally helps to remove it from the body.

In new-born babies, there are many extra red blood cells in the blood that have to be broken up. Some babies' livers are not mature enough to cope and so the bilirubin is left in the blood, causing the yellow colour.

## How can it be treated?

Often your baby will gradually recover from jaundice as the liver becomes more active. If the jaundice appears early after birth, or the jaundice increases, your baby will have a blood test. If the bilirubin level is very high, he/she may need to start phototherapy to reduce the bilirubin in the blood.

## How does phototherapy work?

With phototherapy your baby can change the bilirubin into a different form so that it can be expelled in the urine and stools. As a result, you may find that your baby's urine is dark and concentrated. The stools may also be a bit loose. Phototherapy treatment usually takes a few days, depending on the level of jaundice.

## How is the phototherapy given?

Phototherapy can be given in two ways:

1. Phototherapy lamp – light treatment from above your baby that is given in hospital.
2. Bilisoft © 'blankets' – the same light treatment from underneath your baby. The Hospital @home service delivers phototherapy by bilisoft © blanket at home. The nurses will show you how to use the blanket and leave it with you to use at home. The nurses will visit regularly to assess and monitor your baby.

If your baby has been referred for home based phototherapy, here are some things you will need to be aware of:

- Some signs you must tell your nurse about:  
**Poor feeding, irritability, sleepiness, floppiness, fever. Pale stools**  
Your baby may need to be seen by a doctor in hospital.
- Ensure your baby has as much of his /her body exposed to and as close to the light as possible. Clothes or blankets will block out the light and therefore should not be worn underneath the Bilisoft Blanket.
- Your baby needs to be fed frequently (at least 3 hourly - breast or bottle)
- You will need to be prepared for a trip to the hospital at short notice in case more intensive treatment or tests are needed.
- Ensure your baby has regular cuddles
- As the jaundice gets better, you will find that your baby will start to feed better and become more active.
- Once the jaundice has improved, your baby can stop the treatment and your midwife will resume usual care.

## Any further questions?

If you would like more information, please ask your midwife or the H@H nurse or phone 07557 202 900 from 8am to 10 pm, 7 days per week.