

## Fact Sheet

### Phototherapy at home

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#### What is phototherapy?

Phototherapy is the use of bluish-coloured lights to treat jaundice. Jaundice causes your baby's skin and white section of the eyes to turn yellow in colour. This is a common problem in newborn baby's blood due to the liver and body being slow to get rid of bilirubin which is the end product of red cell break down. Bilirubin normally leaves the baby's body via their poo's and urine.

Phototherapy reduces levels of jaundice in babies by breaking down the bilirubin which helps fade the yellow colour of the skin. This can also cause babies to poo more often.

**Jaundice that is not treated may lead to serious health problems in babies**

Phototherapy is delivered safely in many different ways either in hospital or at home and all treatment is discussed with your baby's doctor.

#### How long will the baby need phototherapy?

Babies usually need phototherapy treatment for 1-3 days. Each day, your midwife will check your baby and take a blood sample from your baby's foot to test the jaundice level. You will be contacted that day with the result and if the bilirubin level stays high, your baby may need to come back into hospital for more treatment.

Once phototherapy treatment has stopped, follow up will be with your local doctor and Child and Family Health Nurse as soon as possible or as advised by your midwife.

For more information on jaundice please refer to [The Sydney Children's Hospitals Network fact sheet](#)



**Bilibed**

#### Phototherapy on the postnatal ward

Your baby is dressed in a Bilibed suit wearing only a nappy. Your midwife will help you to prepare baby for treatment. Your baby may become unsettled whilst on the Bilibed.

Things that may help to settle your baby are:

- ensure your baby has been fed prior to placing your baby on the Bilibed
- make sure your baby is warm enough, an extra cover may be needed.



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**Bilisoft**

### Phototherapy at home

- your baby is wrapped in the Bilisoft wearing only a nappy
- a protective mask is used to cover the eyes
- during feeds, your baby may remain wrapped in the Bilisoft.
- change your baby's nappy at each feed
- change the nappy on another surface, away from the Bilisoft to keep the cover clean and dry
- spot clean the cover with a damp cloth if it becomes dirty.

**Remember to follow the SIDS guidelines for safe sleeping at all times**

It is recommended that your baby wears the eye covers provided, as there is a risk that the blue light will reach the eyes. Your midwife will help you to put the eye covers on your baby.

### Feeding Your Baby

Babies with jaundice may be sleepy and not wake for feeds or be sleepy while feeding. It is important that your baby feeds often so as to get plenty of fluids and help to poo out the bilirubin (Jaundice).

**Breastfeed your baby at least every 3 hours and at least 7-8 times a day**

### If your baby isn't waking for feeds

- place your baby in skin to skin, chest to chest contact with you
- express a few drops of milk to encourage baby to latch to your breast
- if baby does not feed, express your milk and feed to your baby via cup or bottle
- your midwife will show you how to express your breast milk
- if your baby needs extra feeds, your midwife will discuss this with you.

To get help with breastfeeding:  
Contact the Australian Breastfeeding Association  
[www.breastfeeding.asn.au](http://www.breastfeeding.asn.au)  
Helpline (1800 686 268)

### At home - taking baby's temperature

- take baby's temperature at each feed time. baby's temperature should be **36.5 – 37.10C**
- write down baby's temperature, feeds, wet nappies and poos on the 'infant feeding chart' that your midwife gives you

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#### If the temperature is 36.4°C or below

- place your baby skin to skin chest to chest contact with you, and encourage your baby to feed
- ensure that the room is warm enough and free from drafts. Your baby may need an extra blanket.

#### If the temperature is above 37.4°C

- Place your baby skin to skin with the mother, and encourage your baby to feed
- Remove some of your babies clothing or blankets
- In hot weather ensure the room is cool.

#### Sun Safety

Phototherapy is the safest treatment for a baby who is jaundiced and needs treatment. Exposing a baby to direct sunlight can place a baby at risk of sunburn.

**Exposing your baby to sunlight is not recommended**

#### Getting help

If you are concerned about your baby, contact:

Midwifery @ Home 0419 255 898

Business hours 8:00am-8:00pm

OR

Take your baby to your GP or The Children's Hospital at Westmead.

**We welcome further feedback on this brochure as a way of continually improving our service.**

#### **Send your feedback to:**

WSLHD-Get\_Involved@health.nsw.gov.au