

# Neonatal Jaundice Information for Parents

(הסבר להורים על צהבת ילודים)

## What is neonatal jaundice?

Neonatal jaundice is a very common phenomenon. Unlike adult jaundice, it is not an infectious disease and it is not contagious. Neonatal jaundice refers to the yellow color of the skin that most infants have on the second or third day after birth. The yellow tone of the skin is caused by the accumulation of bilirubin - a by-product of the breakdown of red blood cells.

## Why is jaundice so common in newborns?

The system responsible for the removal of bilirubin from the liver is not mature enough in the first few days after birth while there is a high level of bilirubin being produced by the accelerated breakdown of red blood cells.

## How can I detect jaundice?

The best way to check is by looking at the baby's skin color in good lighting. Jaundice first appears in the face; then, as the level of jaundice increases, the color spreads to the chest, arms, abdomen and legs.

## Is jaundice dangerous to the baby's health?

In the vast majority of infants, only mild jaundice develops, which carries no risk. In some cases, the bilirubin level may rise to levels that are dangerous for the baby's brain. This is the reason for the attention given to the detection and treatment of jaundice.

## Which babies need special attention in terms of jaundice?

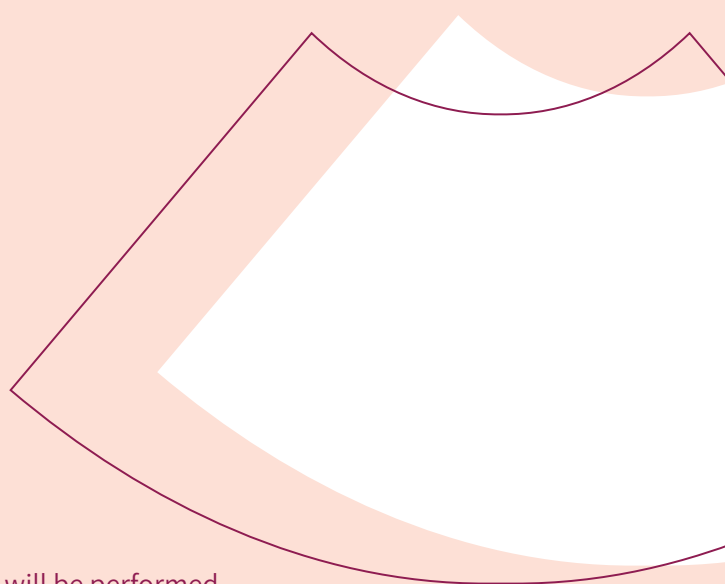
1. Babies born earlier than the 37th week of pregnancy.
2. Babies who develop jaundice before the age of 24 hours after birth.
3. When there are difficulties with breastfeeding / feeding.
4. When the baby's older sibling developed severe jaundice that required treatment.
5. When the baby is suffering from a hematoma under the scalp related to childbirth.
6. Babies with G6PD enzyme deficiency ("sensitivity to fava beans").
7. Babies with an A or B blood type whose mother's blood type is O.
8. Babies whose mother's blood type is RH negative, if the mother did not receive ANTI D during the current pregnancy or previous pregnancies.

## How are high levels of jaundice treated?

When bilirubin values reach a level that requires treatment - the standard treatment is phototherapy. This treatment exposes the baby's skin to a special light wavelength, with lamps designed especially for this purpose. The decision regarding the treatment depends on the baby's age (measured in hours) and the presence of risk factors. The treatment is administered with the baby lying naked under the light, with his eyes covered with a special mask. In isolated, rare cases, when the jaundice does not respond to this treatment, it may be necessary to administer antibodies or perform blood exchange transfusions. Phototherapy treatment is administered at the Neonatal Department under the supervision of the attending medical staff.

If the mother is interested in doing so, and in the absence of any medical contraindication, phototherapy can be administered in the mother's room.

A Neonatal Department nurse will visit the newborn every 4 hours to measure his body temperature, evaluate his skin color and breathing, and monitor feeding and secretions.



## Dear Parents!

### It is important:

- ◆ Not to leave the baby unattended.
- ◆ To make sure that the baby's eyes are covered with the provided eye cover.
- ◆ To monitor the baby's skin color and breathing.
- ◆ To breastfeed / feed the baby every 3 - 4 hours.

Monitoring of bilirubin levels - a blood test taken from the heel - will be performed at the Neonatal Department in accordance with the doctor's instructions. When the bilirubin level reaches sufficiently low values, the phototherapy will be stopped and the monitoring will continue per the doctor's decision.

## When is it recommended to have the baby examined after discharge from the hospital?

If the bilirubin level was relatively high at the time of discharge - the baby will be invited for repeat examination at the hospital or referred to the HMO clinic a day or two after discharge. In any case, it is advisable to have the attending pediatrician or a nurse (at the HMO or Tipat Halav - Family Health Center) examine the baby at the age of 3 - 5 days.

## When does jaundice go away?

In breastfed newborns, jaundice can last for 2 - 3 weeks. In formula-fed infants, the jaundice will usually disappear by the age of two weeks. If the parents still notice jaundice after the age of three weeks, they should consult with the pediatrician.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to the medical or nursing staff of the Neonatal Department.

**Congratulations,  
The Neonatal Department Staff**