Neonatal Jaundice - Management of Babies at Home

Up to 1 in 3 infants experience some degree of early jaundice. If they are vigorous, feeding well and well-hydrated, most will need no particular treatment – if such babies are not deeply jaundiced, they do not need a bilirubin measurement. Be aware that occasionally breast fed babies who have not established feeding can become severely dehydrated and jaundiced within the first few days of life. Jaundice can also be difficult to recognise in babies with naturally dark skin, examination of the sclera of these babies is useful.

Babies seen in the community should fall into one of the following three categories:

1. **Clinically well baby less than 2 weeks old who is significantly jaundiced.**
   If the baby is unwell, please see instructions below (category 3). If the baby is well but is deeply jaundiced they need to be booked in for a bilirubin measurement. This should be done by contacting St Peter’s Hospital on 01932 872000 and ask the switchboard to bleep the neonatal postnatal SHO on 5496. Appointments are available in Joan Booker Ward daily between 1 and 3pm and will be coordinated by the neonatal postnatal SHO and the midwife in charge of Joan Booker ward. (Outside of these times, the baby will be seen by a neonatal SHO wherever possible. If the baby is well it is rarely necessary to check bilirubin levels overnight, it can wait for the following morning). If the jaundice is high enough to require phototherapy, the infant should then be admitted. If the baby is less than 1 week old and the mother is able to stay with her infant, both can be admitted to Joan Booker ward into a side room. If no bed is available or the baby is older than 1 week, the infant will need to be admitted to Ash ward.

2. **Clinically well baby more than 2 weeks old who has a degree of jaundice.**
   Babies should be booked in for a prolonged jaundice screen on Transitional Care. This should be done by contacting St Peter’s Hospital on 01932 872000 and ask the switchboard to bleep the neonatal postnatal SHO on bleep 5496. Appointments are available in Transitional care on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday.

3. **Unwell neonate with jaundice.** The infant needs to be assessed by a doctor. Where appropriate, the GP should be asked to come and assess the infant at home. Otherwise, such babies will be assessed by the General Paediatric SHO at St Peter’s Hospital, (bleep 5069). The mother will be asked to take the infant to the Paediatric A&E department. The infant will be seen there by the general paediatric SHO and seen by or discussed with the paediatric registrar. If admission is required this will be to Ash ward.

**Guideline Details**

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