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HEALTH

Jaundice in newborn babies: Causes, symptoms, treatment and prevention

From symptoms of Jaundice in newborn babies on how they are treated to the prevention measures, know all about the disorder here from the expert.





By Tapatrisa Das, Delhi

Jaundice is a health [condition](#) in which the skin, whites of the eyes and mucous membranes turn yellow due to the high level of bilirubin – a yellow-orange bile pigment present in the body. Newborn [babies](#) often are detected having Jaundice. However, it is extremely common. Most of the newborn babies, after being born, gets Jaundice within the first one-two weeks. Speaking to HT Lifestyle, Dr. Sai Kiran, MD, DrNB, Consultant Neonatologist at Fernandez Foundation noted down the causes, symptoms, treatment and [prevention](#) of Jaundice in newborn babies.

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Causes:

"The most common [reason](#) behind newborn jaundice is increased Red Blood Cell (RBC) mass, which leads to excess production of bilirubin (jaundice causing pigment). This pigment takes some time to clear because of an immature liver. The pigment then gets deposited in the skin and eyes leading to yellow discoloration in babies. If a mother has a Rh-negative blood group, sensitised with a Rh-positive baby born earlier, or if the mother and baby both have different blood groups, the chances of newborn jaundice are higher. Jaundice is also more common in premature babies, babies with low birth weight, or babies who have lost a lot of weight," said Dr Sai Kiran. He further added that even though Jaundice in newborn babies is not considered, the bilirubin levels in blood should be monitored at all times.

Symptoms:

Monitoring is the key in detecting Jaundice in newborn babies. In most cases, a physical examination including a bilirubin metre and a blood test is prescribed. Jaundice usually appears 3-7 days after birth – hence, after discharge, a follow-up consultation with the Paediatrician is recommended in order to ensure if the baby has Jaundice.

Treatment:

"If on newborn jaundice screening and the blood jaundice levels exceed a certain threshold on an age-specific nomogram, treatment is initiated. Phototherapy, which involves exposing the baby to blue light, is used as treatment," said the doctor. In Phototherapy, the light helps in converting the Jaundice pigment in the skin and blood to an easily excretable form, which further helps in lowering the Jaundice levels.

Prevention:

Breastfeeding is recommended by the doctor as a prevention method for Jaundice in newborns. "Mothers should continue breastfeeding and consult a lactation counsellor if facing problems in latching or finding the right position to feed your baby. There is no need to practice any dietary restrictions by the mother," said Dr Sai Kiran.

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