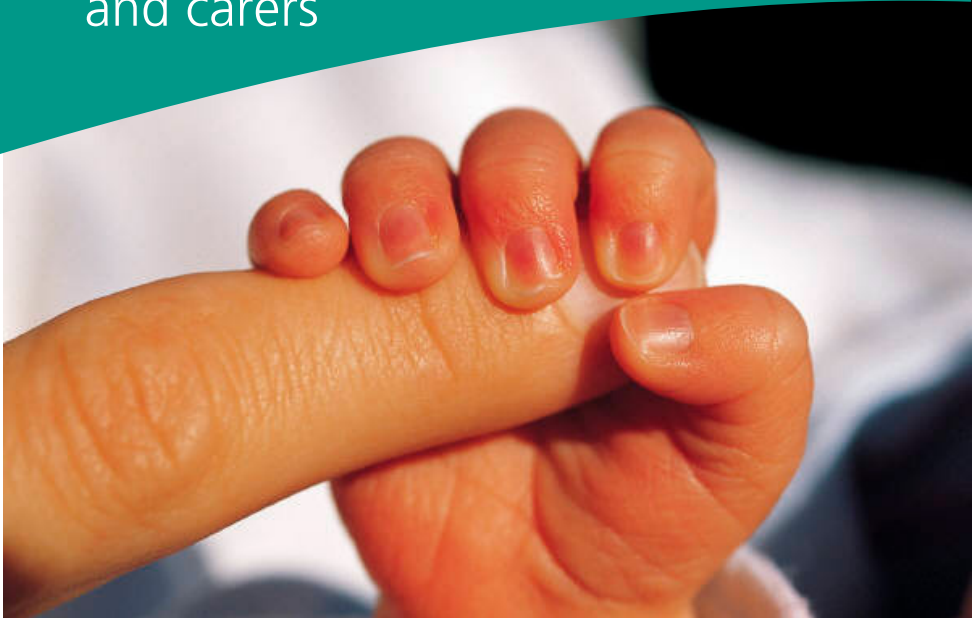


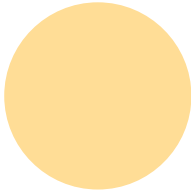
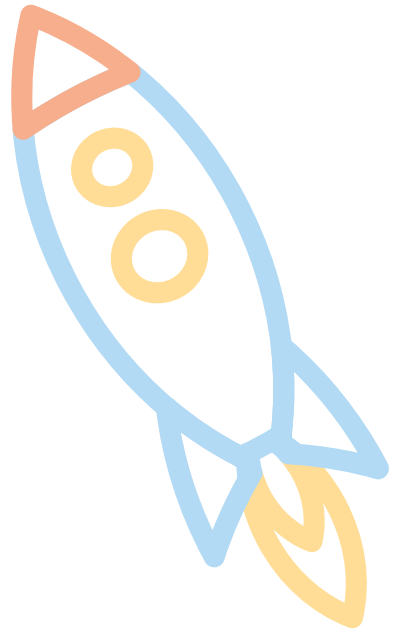
# Prolonged jaundice in babies

Information for parents  
and carers



leeds children's  
hospital

caring about children



Jaundice is the yellow colouring of skin and eyes. It is a common condition in newborn babies.

### Why is my baby jaundiced?

Newborn babies are born with a high number of red blood cells and these are special, red, foetal blood cells to take away oxygen from the maternal red blood cells. These cells are no longer needed and are broken down and exchanged for new adult ones. As these blood cells break down, the body produces a waste product called bilirubin. When bilirubin levels in the body are raised, it causes jaundice.

The liver removes the bilirubin from the blood but the liver of a newborn baby takes a while to become fully operational and then has a big job to do in clearing waste bilirubin made by the dying red blood cells; therefore, jaundice is common in newborn babies and even more common in premature babies.

Although jaundice is usually harmless and goes away by itself; occasionally, jaundice can indicate that your baby is unwell. All babies aged over 14 days, or 21 days if born before 37 weeks should be investigated to ensure there is no underlying cause. This is called a prolonged jaundice screen. Almost all babies with prolonged jaundice have no health problems.

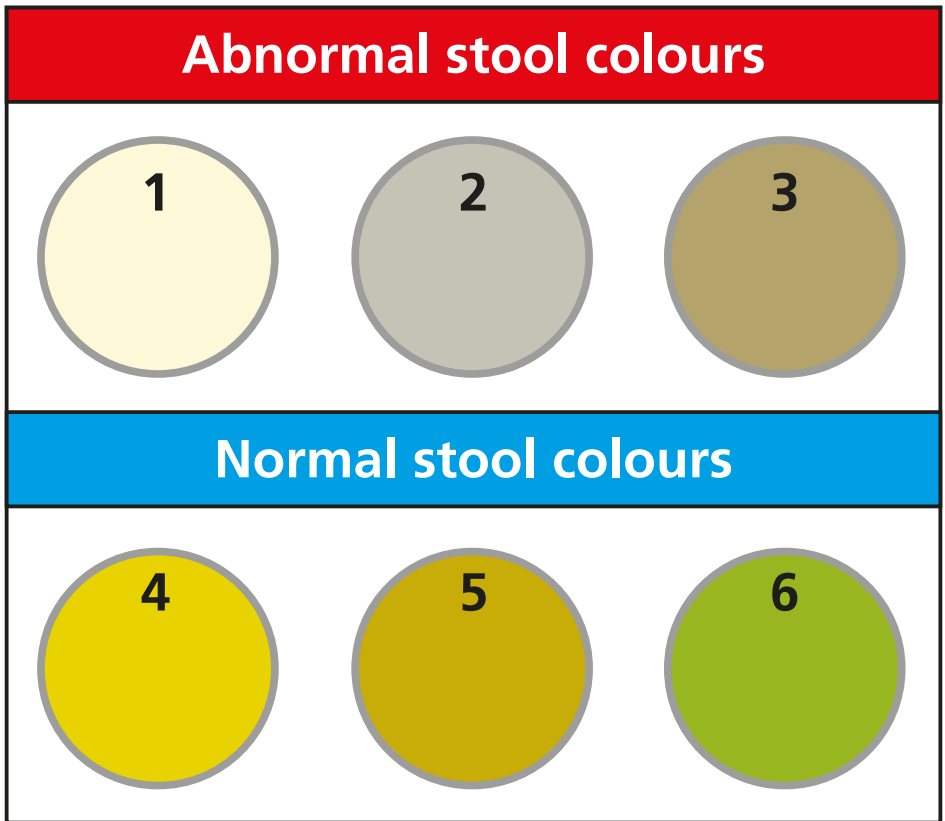
## Why do some babies remain jaundiced?

Jaundice has usually cleared by the time your baby is 2 weeks old; however, sometimes, it lasts longer. There are several reasons why jaundice may continue.

- Your baby may be premature.
- Jaundice may continue in babies who are well and being breast fed. Breastfeeding can be continued safely and the jaundice should be gone by 6 - 8 weeks. If you feel it is getting worse or your baby develops pale stools, tell your GP or health visitor as we will want to see you again.
- Your baby may have a condition in which blood cells break down more quickly than is normal for babies. This is usually recognised very soon after the baby is born or even during pregnancy and further treatment may be necessary.
- Your baby may have an infection.
- Your baby may have a thyroid gland that is not working properly. This is usually tested as part of a blood test carried out on all babies between 5 and 10 days of age called the Newborn Screening blood test.
- Your baby may have a problem with their liver; however, this is rare.

## What is done in a prolonged jaundice screen?

When you arrive, we will weigh your baby to ensure they are growing. A healthcare professional will check some details about your baby, including behaviour, feeding patterns and general well-being. You will also be asked about the colour of your baby's urine and stools.



If your baby's stools are pale or white, like the abnormal stools above, please tell us because this is important.

For the screening, blood tests will be needed. A sucrose solution may be given as comfort during the blood test so your baby will not become too upset.

You may be in hospital for up to 1 hour. If your baby is well and there are no other concerns, you can go straight home from the clinic. You will receive a letter with the blood results.

You may be contacted by a healthcare professional if your baby requires any further treatment or follow-up. Sometimes, we may need to repeat a test but that does not necessarily mean there is a problem.

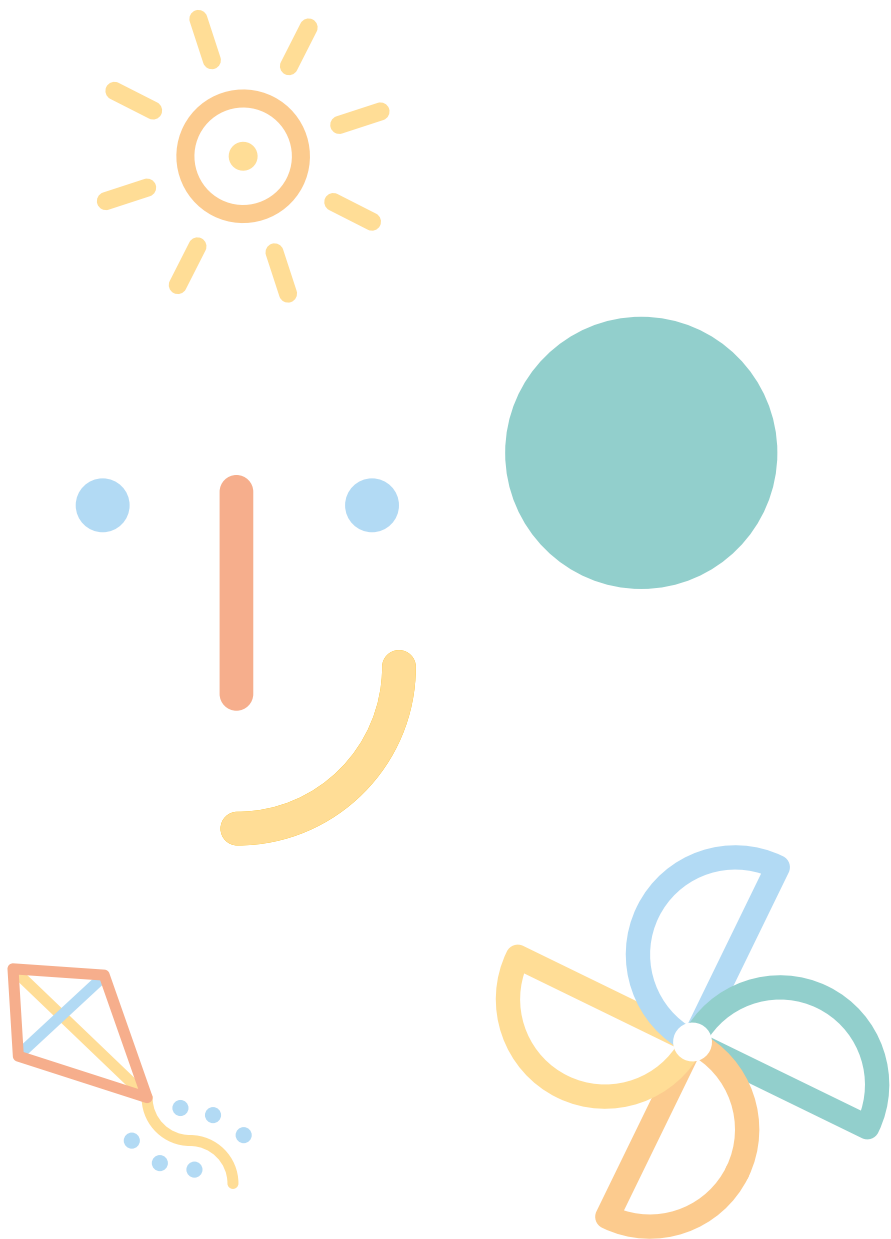
If you have not heard anything from us within 1 week, please call the PANDA Unit on: **0113 392 0938** or **0113 3927440** if it is out of hours.

## Resources

**Children's Liver Disease Foundation:**

<https://childliverdisease.org/liver-information/baby-jaundice/>

or telephone: **0121 2124300**





## What did you think of your care?

Scan the QR code or visit [bit.ly/nhsleedsfft](https://bit.ly/nhsleedsfft)

*Your views matter*



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