



Dr Wolfgang Muller (Consultant Paediatrician)

Parent Information Guide:



Understanding Breastfeeding Jaundice in Newborns

Why some mild jaundice might be a normal and even helpful part of early life

What is Jaundice?

Jaundice is when your baby's skin or eyes look a little yellow. It happens because of a natural substance in the body called **bilirubin**, which builds up while your baby's liver is still maturing.

What is “Breastfeeding Jaundice”?

In the first few days of life, especially in babies who are **breastfed**, a mild rise in bilirubin is common. This is known as **breastfeeding jaundice**. It often appears **in the first week** of life and usually **clears up on its own** as feeding improves and your baby grows.



Is Breastfeeding Jaundice Harmful?

Usually **no** — in fact, many doctors and researchers believe **mild jaundice in breastfed babies is natural and may even have some benefits**.



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✓ Why Might It Be Helpful?

Reason	How it helps your baby
 Natural antioxidant	Bilirubin helps protect cells from damage in the first days of life.
 Energy saver	While your baby is still getting used to feeding, the liver slows down to save energy.
 Supports digestion	Breast milk may slightly delay digestion early on, giving your baby time to adjust.
 Very common	It happens to many healthy babies all around the world and usually settles naturally.

⚠ When to Get Medical Advice

While mild jaundice is usually not a problem, **it's important to watch your baby closely** and speak to your midwife or doctor if:

- The yellow colour is getting darker or spreading
- Your baby is very sleepy and hard to wake for feeds
- Your baby has **not passed stool (poo) or is passing very pale stool**
- Your baby's **urine is getting very dark**
- Your baby is **not feeding well**
- Jaundice lasts **more than 2 weeks**
- You are worried at all



What Will Healthcare Professionals Do?

- They may check your baby's bilirubin level with a **skin scan or blood test**.
- If needed, they may recommend **phototherapy** (light treatment) to safely reduce bilirubin.



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Final Thoughts

Mild breastfeeding jaundice is **usually a normal part of early development**. It often improves with **regular feeding** and support — but healthcare teams are here to help if things don't seem right.

If you're unsure or worried about your baby, always ask.

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