

# Home Phototherapy Patient Instructions for Parents

## What is Jaundice?

- Jaundice is a common, temporary, and usually harmless condition in newborn infants, appearing during the first week of the baby's life.
- Jaundice occurs when there is a build-up of a naturally occurring substance in the blood called bilirubin. Bilirubin is a yellow pigment in the blood. Bilirubin is produced by the normal breakdown of red blood cells. As bilirubin begins to build up, it deposits under the skin causing the baby's skin and eyes to appear yellow or orange.

## How is it measured?

- The higher the bilirubin level, the more yellow-orange (jaundiced) your baby's skin will appear.
  - Not only will the color become more noticeable, it also usually spreads from head to toe. So, you may notice it on the face first, then it may progress down the chest, stomach, arms, and finally down to the legs.
  - However when jaundice gets worse, just looking at a baby's skin is usually not accurate enough to determine their risk.
- Your pediatrician may instruct you to have your baby's blood drawn to check the level of bilirubin. It is natural for the bilirubin to rise until the fourth or fifth day of life.
  - When your pediatrician looks at the lab level of the bilirubin and compares it to the average levels for your baby's exact age, they can make a determination about the level of risk for complications of high jaundice levels.
  - From there they can decide on a plan of action including when to check the level again or for treatment of jaundice.

## What is the Treatment?

- High levels of bilirubin can be dangerous to a baby. It is very important to follow the plan you have made with your pediatrician to obtain periodic blood samples and, if necessary, to treat the jaundice to ensure the healthy development of your child.
- Bilirubin can be removed from the body either through the stool or through the skin. It is important to **feed your baby every 2-3 hours**. The more you feed, the more your baby stools and the jaundice can improve. If you are breastfeeding, supplementation with formula may be recommended by your pediatrician depending on how feeding is going.
- You may have heard old advice to treat jaundice by placing your child in sunlight. However, this is not recommended because it is not effective and may cause sunburn.

## What if my baby's bilirubin continues to rise?

- Your pediatrician will decide whether your baby needs further treatment based on the bilirubin lab results as well as other factors.
  - It may be decided that your baby needs phototherapy. Phototherapy uses special light to reduce the jaundice. The light shines directly on the baby's skin to breakdown the bilirubin. This treatment is used for a few days until the liver is mature enough to handle the bilirubin on its own. Sometimes this needs to be done in the hospital, but also can be done at home.

## What is the biliblanket?

- Your doctor may prescribe the biliblanket as a home treatment for your child's jaundice. This form of phototherapy uses fiber optics in a pad that is placed directly against your baby to bathe the skin in light. Absorption of this light leads to the elimination of bilirubin.

### How do I get the biliblanket?

- The company that provides biliblankets is called Apria. After Apria receives the order for a biliblanket from your Kaiser pediatrician (which might take 1-2 hours), Apria should deliver the biliblanket to your home within the next 4 hours. If you have not received the biliblanket within 6-8 hours, please call Apria.

### How do I use the biliblanket?

- Apria will instruct you in how to turn on and off the biliblanket, and how to apply it. The biliblanket should always be set to the “high” setting which is setting 2.
- **The biliblanket needs to be used as close to 24 hours a day as possible** to provide continuous treatment. With this convenient form of phototherapy, your child can be diapered, clothed, held, and nursed during treatment.
- The booklet that Apria will supply with the biliblanket is illustrated to show how you may clothe your baby while using the biliblanket. The blanket should not produce significant amounts of heat, but if your baby feels warm then use less layers of clothing.

### How long will the biliblanket be used on my baby?

- Blood will be drawn and tested during treatment to check bilirubin levels and determine when normal levels are reached and phototherapy is no longer needed.
- The length of time phototherapy treatment is needed varies from one baby to the next as each baby's condition is different. Most babies have phototherapy treatment for several days.
- *Your baby will have a follow up bilirubin determination done 2 days after stopping home phototherapy. Do not call Apria to pick up the biliblanket until you discuss the result with your pediatrician.*

### What if I have more questions or concerns?

- If you have not received the biliblanket from Apria within 4 hours, or have a question about the equipment itself please call Apria.
- If you have **ANY OTHER** questions about your baby such as trouble with feeding, lethargy, or fever, or if you cannot reach Apria about an equipment issue, please call the Call Center. **The Call Center** is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, so please do not hesitate to call immediately if you have any concerns.

### Follow up instructions

- When you go for the bilirubin lab test, go to the Kaiser Lab. It is important that you go to the lab **at least one hour prior to your appointment** with the pediatrician or in follow up clinic so that the bilirubin results will be available.
- A pediatrician or nurse will call you with the results, which are usually available within 1-2 hours after your lab draw is completed. If you have not heard back within 4 hours of the lab draw, please call the Call Center. Please do not assume the level is ok if you do not get a phone call.

### Important Phone Numbers

If you have questions about your baby, call the Call Center at: **408-362-4740** .

If you have questions about the biliblanket, call Apria: **408-383-4400** .

Your next appointment to have the bilirubin level checked in the Lab: \_\_\_\_\_  
(1 hour before your doctor appointment).

Your next appointment to see your pediatrician : \_\_\_\_\_