

# Phototherapy

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## What is phototherapy?

Phototherapy (light therapy) is a way of treating jaundice. Special lights help break down the bilirubin in your baby's skin so that it can be removed from his or her body. This lowers the bilirubin level in your baby's blood.

During phototherapy, the bilirubin level in your baby's blood will be checked at least once every day. Phototherapy is stopped when the bilirubin is at a safe level.

## How will phototherapy be given to my baby?

There are two ways to give phototherapy:

- using a “biliblanket”, a covered pad with flexible tubes of lights
- using a phototherapy light, a special spotlight above an incubator

Your baby's doctor will decide which method of phototherapy is best for your baby. The biliblanket and phototherapy spotlight are often used together.

Your nurse will help you learn how to use the biliblanket or the phototherapy spotlight.

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## How do I care for my baby during phototherapy?

**It is important that your baby's skin is exposed to the lights as much as possible.**

- Feed your baby often, at least every 2 to 3 hours. This can help your baby's body get rid of bilirubin through the urine and stools.
- Change your baby's diaper often. Loose or watery stools (bowel movements) are common during phototherapy. Please let the nurse know if your baby is having loose or watery stools.
- Do not put any creams, lotions or Vaseline on your baby's skin during phototherapy.
- Please record all your baby's feedings, wet diapers and stools on the Feeding Sheet.

## Using the biliblanket

The biliblanket is a covered pad with lights. Your baby will lie on top of the pad so that the lighted area is directly against his or her back.

It is important to make sure your baby's back is against the lighted area of the biliblanket at all times during treatment. **The biliblanket can be used 24 hours a day.**



The skin in contact with the biliblanket is the first place where bilirubin is broken down. You may notice that the skin in this area starts to look bleached or reddened. This shows that your baby's skin, which was jaundiced (a yellow colour), is returning to its normal colour. As the bilirubin levels come down, the rest of your baby's skin returns to its normal colour.

When you hold and care for your baby, do not pull the tube attached to the biliblanket or it will disconnect from the phototherapy box.

Please call a nurse if you need help moving your baby while he or she is getting phototherapy.

## Using the phototherapy light

The phototherapy spotlight is placed above an incubator. Inside the incubator, your baby stays warm, wearing only a diaper. This exposes as much skin as possible to the lights.



Phototherapy  
spotlight

The incubator is heated to keep your baby warm and the nurse will regularly check your baby's temperature and the temperature inside the incubator. Keep the doors on the incubator closed to keep your baby warm during phototherapy, and to keep your baby safe from falling.

Your baby needs to wear soft eye goggles to protect his or her eyes from the bright lights. They are comfortable to wear. The nurse will show you how to close your baby's eyes and put the goggles on.

**Your baby's eyes should always be covered  
during phototherapy.**

Your baby can come out of the incubator for a short time when he or she needs feeding or care.

Before you take your baby out of the incubator, ask your nurse to check your baby's temperature. Then, you can turn off the light and take off your baby's eye goggles. Wrap your baby in a blanket when you take your baby out of the incubator to keep him or her warm.

After feeding or caring for your baby, put him or her back into the incubator to continue phototherapy. The first time you do this, please call your nurse for help.

The nurse will show you how to:

- position your baby – lying on his or her back, on the biliblanket and under the spotlight
- put the eye goggles back on
- turn on the biliblanket and light

Explain to your visitors that your baby needs to spend most of his or her time under the phototherapy lights. They can look and talk to your baby in the incubator, while he or she is resting between feedings.

The incubator has an alarm system. If the alarm goes off, press your call button to have the nurse come and check the incubator.

**If you have any questions about phototherapy,  
please talk with your baby's nurse.**