



THE NEWBORN EXAMINATION

Introduction

This examination allows us to examine your baby, and is also a good time to ask any questions you might have about your baby.

This leaflet tells you about what we will be looking for when your baby is examined. It also provides some useful information about what happens in the first few weeks after birth.

When will my baby be examined?

Newborn babies are initially examined at birth they then have another more detailed examination within 72 hours following birth.

Who will examine my baby?

A midwife will check your baby over soon after he or she is born.

The more detailed examination will be carried out by a children's doctor (a paediatrician) or a midwife who is qualified in undertaking newborn examinations.

What will the doctor or midwife look for?

They will assess your baby, and in particular will examine your baby's skin, head, heart, hips, eyes and genitalia.

What do I need to tell the person examining my baby?

The person examining your baby will need to know if: -

- There were any problems found during your antenatal ultrasound scans
- Your baby had been lying in a breech position
- Anyone in your family has had problems with dislocated hips as a child
- Anyone in your family is deaf.
- There is any history of cardiac problems in children.

What happens if my baby requires further investigation?

About 1 baby in 10 will have a problem found during the newborn examination. Usually this is a minor concern, which may not need treatment. Some babies will either need further tests or need to be seen again in out-patient clinic after they have been discharged from hospital. Exactly what is done will depend on what has been found. You will be fully informed of any concerns and please feel free to ask any questions that you may have.

Common problems

Bruises and birthmarks

It is very common for newborn babies to have some bruising and/or swelling on the head after birth. This is just the result of the pushing and squeezing that is part of being born and will soon disappear. Babies often have other marks or spots on their skin. Most of these will also go away eventually, although this may take weeks or months. They are sometimes known as 'stork marks' or 'strawberry marks'.



Jaundice

Jaundice is the name given when your baby's skin becomes yellow in appearance; it is common in many newborn babies. It is usually completely normal and disappears within a few days. The midwife or doctor may decide to check the level of jaundice in your baby by doing a blood test. If a baby has severe jaundice, he or she may need light treatment called phototherapy. Jaundice is caused when your baby's blood has too much of a chemical called bilirubin. Newborns tend to have higher levels of this chemical because their livers are too immature initially to deal with it.

Heart Murmurs

A murmur is the noise that is made by blood as it passes through the chambers, valves and blood vessels of the heart. Murmurs may be normal innocent murmurs and are often heard in newborn babies. In others it may be the first sign that there is a problem with the heart. The paediatrician may need to arrange some further tests to be done to make sure that the heart is normal.

Hips

Checking of your baby's hips is an important part of the newborn examination. Some babies are born with hips that are not properly formed in their joints. This condition is more common in babies who have been lying in a breech position or where someone else in the family has had a similar problem. If the paediatrician/midwife finds any problem with your baby's hips, or if there is any reason why your baby may be at risk of hip problems, they will arrange for a scan of the hips. An appointment will also be made for them to be seen by a specialist to check the hips again after discharge from the hospital.

Genitalia

During the newborn examination the doctor or midwife will check your baby's genitalia. This is especially important in boys to make sure the testicles are in the right place. In some boys the testicles are not in the scrotum this is known as undescended testes. If this is found, your baby will need to be seen by a specialist who will decide if a small operation is needed to bring the testicles down.

Cataracts

A cataract is rare but an important problem in newborn babies. It happens when the lens of the eye is cloudy and may affect a baby's vision. We will examine your baby's eyes with a special torch to check for cataracts.

After I take my baby home, how will I know if my baby is ill?

It is important for parents to be aware of the sort of things that may be a sign of illness in your baby.

This is a list of things to look for. A baby that: -

- Is not feeding well or keeps vomiting.
- Is not gaining weight
- Is unusually hot or cold.
- Is jaundiced before 24 hours of age or after 2 weeks of age.
- Is unusually quiet lethargic
- Is 'just not right' and causes you concern

Seek medical help **IMMEDIATELY** if: -

- Your baby turns blue or becomes very pale
- Your baby has difficulty with breathing or has pauses between breaths of over 20 seconds.
- Your baby is difficult to wake or is unusually sleepy.

Sometimes it is difficult to tell if a baby is ill. If you are worried about your baby, you can also bring him/her to the Accident and Emergency department

Or contact your midwife, health visitor, GP or NHS Direct: 08454647