

10 Steps to spot Jaundice in Black & Brown Babies

1 WHERE POSSIBLE ASSESS IN NATURAL DAYLIGHT

Ensure you are in natural daylight for the most accurate assessment. Artificial lighting may distort skin tones and mask subtle signs of jaundice.

2 EXAMINE THE BABY'S SKIN

Remove clothing to check the baby's skin, focusing on areas where yellowing may be more visible such as eyes, gums, tongue and mucous membranes, palms and soles.

3 CHECK THE WHITES OF THE EYES

Look for yellowing in the sclera (whites of the eyes), a key sign of jaundice.

4 PERFORM A SKIN BLANCH TEST

Gently press your finger on the baby's forehead or nose, if the skin is jaundiced, it will appear yellow when the finger is removed (just before blood returns to the area).

5 CHECK PALMS AND SOLES

Press on the palms and soles, as yellowing may be more noticeable in these areas.

6 INSPECT THE INSIDE OF THE MOUTH

Look for yellowing on tongue, gums and mucous membranes. Baby's mouth may appear dry, which may suggest dehydration.

7 ASSESS FOR OTHER SYMPTOMS

- Lethargy or excessive sleepiness.
- Poor feeding patterns.
- Fewer wet or dirty nappies than expected.
- Dark urine (cola-like) or pale stools.

8 URGENT SIGNS REQUIRING MEDICAL ATTENTION

- Jaundice within 24 hours of birth.
- Worsening yellowing, especially in the sclera (whites of the eyes), palms, or soles.
- Lethargy, poor feeding, or decreased wet nappies.
- Dark urine or pale stools.
- Baby appears unwell or parents express concern.

9 DIAGNOSTIC TESTS

Heel Prick Test: For babies younger than 24 hours to measure bilirubin levels.
Bilirubinometer: For babies > 24 hours, use for non-invasive bilirubin readings, measure serum bilirubin if level is 250 micromol/litre or more.

10 BE MINDFUL OF SUBTLE SIGNS

Visual signs of jaundice may be harder to detect. It can be difficult to see yellow skin. Always consider diagnostic tests in all babies even if visual signs are subtle. Escalate for senior review if unsure.

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