

# Caring for Your Baby While Using Phototherapy

This fact sheet will help you know what you need to do to properly care for your baby while they are undergoing phototherapy. Use this information as a general guide or supplement to the instructions given by your doctor or nurse. You will need to keep track of your baby's temperature, how much milk they drink, and the number of diaper changes.

## Why does my baby need phototherapy?

Phototherapy is used on babies who have too much **bilirubin** [BIL-lee-roo-bin] in their blood. Too much bilirubin can cause **jaundice** [JAWN-dis], a condition in which the skin and eyes have a yellowish color. Jaundice is common in newborn babies for the first 3 to 5 days and can be treated with **phototherapy** [foe-toe-THER-ah-pee]. Phototherapy, also called **light treatment**, is a special light that shines on a baby's skin. This light helps change bilirubin so it's easier for the body to get rid of it.

## Caring for your baby during phototherapy

Fill out the record sheet on the back of this handout to record the events of your baby's care during phototherapy. This sheet is provided as a guide for information your doctor may request. Take the record sheet with you to your doctor's visits.

**Do not use any lotions, oils, or creams on the baby's exposed skin during therapy.**

### Room temperature

- Make sure the room temperature is 72°F (22.2°C) or higher during phototherapy.
- Use a room thermometer near the phototherapy unit to monitor the room temperature.

### Baby temperature

Your baby's temperature should be between 98 °F (36.7 °C) and 100 °F (37.8 °C) during phototherapy. Take your baby's temperature by holding the thermometer under your baby's armpit (axillary temperature).



- Take your baby's temperature 2 times when you start therapy or after a 1-hour break.
  - Take their temperature before phototherapy.
  - Take their temperature 20 minutes after therapy begins to check that your baby's temperature is stable.
- Once your baby's temperature is stable, take their temperature every 3 to 4 hours.

### If your baby's temperature is below 98 °F

- 1 Remove your baby from the phototherapy unit and wrap them in a swaddle.
- 2 Increase the temperature of the room.
- 3 Recheck your baby's temperature in 15 minutes.  
**Call the doctor or nurse if your baby's temperature has not changed.**
- 4 Write down the time and temperature on the record sheet.

Scan the code or visit the link below to watch a video.

<https://app.shoreline.health/s/k2pk2mmLXcCr>



**If your baby’s temperature is above 100°F**

- 1 Remove your baby from the phototherapy unit.
- 2 Lower the room temperature or move the phototherapy unit to a cooler location.
- 3 Recheck your baby’s temperature in 15 minutes. **Call the doctor or nurse if your baby’s temperature has not changed.**
- 4 Write down time and temperature on the record sheet.
- 5 Wrap or clothe your baby as needed when the phototherapy is paused or stopped.

**Food and water consumption**

Newborns are usually fed every 3 to 4 hours. Your doctor may recommend extra feedings during phototherapy.

- 1 Write down the time and amount of feeding on the record sheet.
- 2 Call your doctor or nurse if your baby has problems with feedings.

**Urine (pee) output**

- 1 Write down when you notice an unusual decline in the amount of urine in your baby’s diaper.
- 2 Call your doctor or nurse if your baby does not urinate for 8 hours.

**Stool (poop) output**

As the body breaks down bilirubin, you may notice your baby’s stool change color from black to green.

- 1 Write down when you notice an unusual change in the color of the stool.
- 2 Call your doctor or nurse if your baby has more than 2 consecutive episodes (back-to-back) of diarrhea (loose, watery stool).

**When should I call my doctor?**

Call your doctor or nurse if your baby:

- Has not urinated for 8 hours
- Has not produced stool for 12 hours
- Has had more than 2 consecutive episodes of diarrhea
- Has increased skin irritation
- Is extremely irritable
- Has not eaten for 8 hours or longer
- Has a nonstop or yellow-colored vomit
- Does not maintain a temperature between 98°F (36.7°C) and 100°F (37.8°C)

Date	Feedings (time and amount)	Diaper Changes	Minutes of Light
1–20 (Example)	5, 15, 10, 15 min.	Wet: I I I I	5, 20, 5, 10, 5
	8 oz.	Stool: I	
	min		
	8 oz.		
	min		
	8 oz.		
	min		
	8 oz.		
	min		
	8 oz.		

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