

Class Preparation (Newborn Hepatic):

A mother just delivered a healthy, full-term infant. The mother is concerned because her first child required phototherapy for jaundice. As the nurse, what education would you provide for the mother about jaundice? What instructions are important to explain if the infant requires phototherapy? Are there ways to prevent the infant from developing jaundice?

It is common for babies to experience an increase in bilirubin levels the first few days of life as their body systems adapt to life outside the uterus. You are looking for yellowing of the skin or eyes (most commonly seen). The cause of this is the liver is not fully mature enough to breakdown the RBC, this causes an excessive number of RBCs in the body that need to be broken down into extracellular fluid.

There are ways to decrease hyperbilirubinemia. First would be to feed, "breast is best" but encouraging feeding will help stimulate the bowels to push all the extra bilirubin out. We can monitor for bowel movements.

Another way would be to increase sunlight exposure. Opening the curtains in the hospital the first few days of life will allow the baby to absorb vitamin D and help to excrete the excessive bilirubin in the blood.

If the baby requires phototherapy there are some rules to follow to have the best outcomes. The baby should be in the bassinet to the blue light therapy for several hours daily until the bilirubin levels are within range. The baby will be in just a diaper as small as possible to allow the most light to penetrate the skin and allow the breakdown of RBC. The eyes will be covered with special glasses to protect the baby's eyes.