

Newborn Procedures:

This document briefly outlines the routine procedures offered to babies after birth. If you are looking for more information, check out the links after each topic. We will discuss your preferences around these procedures at your visit.

Newborn Eye Ointment (Erythromycin):

What is erythromycin?

Erythromycin eye ointment is an antibiotic cream that is placed on babies eyes within the first hour after being born.

Why is it given?

Erythromycin is used to prevent eye infections caused by the sexually transmitted infections Gonorrhea and Chlamydia. If these bacteria are present in the vagina at the time of delivery, they can be transferred to the baby and cause infection.

It became law in the 1970's that all newborns had to receive this treatment. However, this law was repealed in 2018 as research showed the antibiotic was **not working** to prevent these eye infections. We know that the best way to prevent eye infections in your baby caused by Gonorrhea and Chlamydia is to treat pregnant people before they deliver.

We recommend testing your urine for Gonorrhea and Chlamydia at the beginning of your pregnancy (it is usually done with your first set of blood tests). If this test is positive for either Gonorrhea or Chlamydia, we will offer treatment. If this test is negative and you are at low risk for contracting a sexually transmitted infection in your pregnancy, you may decide not to give any eye medication.

Are there any risks to giving erythromycin to my baby?

Erythromycin is unlikely to cause any harm to your baby. However, it does contribute to overuse of antibiotics and you could be giving your baby an unnecessary medication.

Want more info? Check out these sites.

- <https://www.cps.ca/en/documents/position/ophthalmia-neonatorum>
- http://www.perinatalservicesbc.ca/Documents/Guidelines-Standards/Newborn/PSBC%20Guideline%20Ophthalmia%20Neonatorum_WEB.pdf?fbclid=IwAR28VPbx8jI5gkKrIy0OFQDEJYTX-Zgfmk1a46cTGjhYrAermdn8jmtQ1bE

Vitamin K Injection:

What is Vitamin K?

Vitamin K is involved in the clotting of blood. As adults, we produce Vitamin K from the bacteria in our guts.

Why is it given to newborns?

Vitamin K does not easily cross the placenta in pregnancy, so newborns can be born with little amounts in their blood and it can take several weeks for them to be able to produce Vitamin K on their own. Babies can have bleeding as a result of too little Vitamin K; this is called Vitamin K deficiency bleeding (VKDB) and happens in about 1 in 5000 newborns. This bleeding can happen anywhere in the baby's body, but most often occurs in the baby's brain or intestines and can be hard to detect. An injection of Vitamin K is recommended within the first 6 hours after your baby is born and decreases your baby's chance of having this kind of bleeding to 1 in a million.

Are there any risks to giving Vitamin K to my baby?

There are no known risks to giving Vitamin K aside from the small poke from the injection. Most babies don't notice it happening or give a small cry but are quickly comforted by snuggling skin to skin.

For some more reading on the topic check out this guideline:

- http://www.perinatalservicesbc.ca/Documents/Guidelines-Standards/Newborn/VitaminK_PracticeResource.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3ZRMXfac5OheO_4XuYpuZaKStoUK21zLso9c1jaElZkuxNbqaQ3oWh6LM

Newborn Screening (NBS):

What is the NBS?

The NBS is a small blood draw that tests for 24 different disorders. This test is done when your baby is 24-48hrs old, either done in hospital or at home by your midwife. Some of the things being tested include Cystic Fibrosis (CF), Phenylketonuria (PKU), Sickle Cell Disease and Hypothyroidism.

Why do newborns get this test?

All of the disorders being tested are rare but they are treatable. By identifying these disorders early, we can start early treatment and prevent long-term complications.

Are there any risks to having this test done?

The only risk to this test is the small poke to their heel required to take the blood sample. Babies usually don't like getting this test done but it only takes a minute or two before it's done.

For the full list on what's being tested check out this document:

- <http://www.perinatalervicesbc.ca/Documents/Guidelines-Standards/Newborn/NewbornScreeningGuideline.pdf>

Jaundice Testing:

What is Jaundice Testing?

Jaundice testing involves checking your baby's bilirubin levels. Bilirubin is what causes jaundice in newborns, the yellowing of their skin and eyes. Bilirubin is produced by the normal breakdown of red blood cells. In Nanaimo there are two ways we test for jaundice, TcB and TSB.

TcB - This stands for Transcutaneous Bilirubin. It involves using a small machine, like a flashlight, and putting it to your baby's skin to measure the amount of bilirubin.

TSB - This stands for Total Serum Bilirubin. It involves taking a small sample of your baby's blood (from a poke in their heel) to directly measure the amount of bilirubin in their blood. A TSB is done when your baby's TcB is high.

Why do we test for Jaundice?

Most babies are able to clear the bilirubin out of their system by drinking milk and peeing and pooping it out. Sometimes bilirubin can build up in your baby's body faster than they are able to clear it. The bilirubin can then deposit into your baby's skin, making it yellow. If there is too much in the baby's blood, the bilirubin can actually deposit into your baby's brain which can cause serious problems. We test for jaundice so that, if needed, we can treat with phototherapy or 'jaundice lights'.

Are there any risks to having this test done?

The TcB is not harmful to your baby. Like the NBS, the TSB can be uncomfortable for them because of the heel poke.

Check this out for more info on jaundice and treatment in babies.

- <https://www.healthline.com/health/newborn-jaundice>

Critical Congenital Heart Disease (CCHD) Screening:

What is a CCHD?

CCHD is a screening test for heart problems that is done when your baby is about 24hrs old. For this test, a small probe that looks like a sticker is placed around your baby's hand and foot to monitor the amount of oxygen that is in their blood. This test can be done at the hospital or by your midwives at home.

Why is it done?

If your baby is not oxygenating their blood well, it may be because of a defect in their heart. Doing this test early can help us identify these problems when your baby is still young and possibly still in hospital.

Are there any risks to my baby with this test?

This test is non invasive and the sticker does not hurt your baby.

For more info on the types of disorders we are screening for check out this link:

- <https://www.cps.ca/en/documents/position/pulse-oximetry-screening>

Newborn Hearing Screen:

What is a hearing screen?

The hearing screen is done by a Public Health Nurse at least 12 hours after your baby is born. Soft sounds are played into your baby's ears using a small probe, while a computer measures the responses from the ears. This test will be done in hospital during your stay or can be arranged in the community.

Why is it done?

Each year in BC, about 400 babies are born with permanent hearing loss. Hearing loss can be temporary or permanent. Since most hearing loss in young children is temporary and treatable, early screening is important.

Are there any risks to my baby getting this test done?

The screening test is very safe and it will not hurt your baby.

For more info, see this link.

- <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthlinkbc-files/hearing-tests-children>

Blood Sugar Monitoring:

What is blood sugar monitoring?

Some babies are at risk of having unstable blood sugars after they are born. Blood sugar testing involves a small poke to your baby's heel to collect a small sample of their blood. If recommended, it is done several times in your baby's first day of life.

Why is it done?

Low blood sugar can be a sign of your baby being unwell. We also know that some babies are at higher risk of having low blood sugar and can have a harder time transitioning after birth. If your baby's blood sugar is low, they may require supplementation with expressed breast milk or with formula. Blood sugar testing may be recommended for your baby if:

- They are very small or large
- They need help breathing after birth
- They show signs of low blood sugar
- You have gestational diabetes
- You are taking certain medications

Are there any risks to blood sugar testing?

Your baby's heel may be a bit sore from the pokes.

For some more in depth info on blood sugar testing read this document:

<https://www.cps.ca/en/documents/position/newborns-at-risk-for-low-blood-glucose>