

Treating bacterial infections in newborn babies

If you need this leaflet in a different language or accessible format
please speak to a member of staff who can arrange it for you.

اگر به این بروشور به زبان دیگر یا در قالب دسترس پذیر نیاز دارید،
لطفاً با یکی از کارکنان صحبت کنید تا آن را برای شما تهیه کند.

Jeśli niniejsza ulotka ma być dostępna w innym języku lub formacie,
proszę skontaktować się z członkiem personelu, który ją dla Państwa przygotowuje.

Dacă aveți nevoie de această broșură într-o altă limbă sau într-un format accesibil,
vă rog să discutați cu un membru al personalului să se ocupe
de acest lucru pentru dumneavoastră

如果您需要本传单的其他语言版本或无障碍格式，请联系工作人员为您安排。

إذا احتجت إلى هذه النشرة بلغة أخرى، أو بتنسيق
يسهل الوصول إليه، يرجى التحدث إلى أحد الموظفين لترتيب ذلك لك.

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Department: Maternity

Document Number: MWL2478

Version: 001

Review Date: 01/02/2028

This leaflet is only about infections caused by bacteria and does not cover viral infections.

Why is my baby on antibiotics?

Bacterial infections can be serious for newborn babies, especially if they are not treated quickly. Some babies (including unborn babies) are more at risk of developing an infection and need extra care and monitoring. It is also important to take the right steps to prevent and treat infections for all mothers and their babies, before and after they are born.

Making decisions together

Decisions about treatment and care are best when they are made together. Healthcare professionals should give you clear information, talk with you about your options and listen carefully to your views and concerns.

They should also:

- always try to give you time to think and make choices about treatments for you and your baby, though in emergencies this isn't always possible.
- explain what is involved and why, if they are offering antibiotics for you or your baby to prevent infection.
- make sure you know who to contact and how to get in touch with them, if you are worried your baby could have an infection after going home.

If you do not understand the information you are given, tell your healthcare professional.

What tests will be done?

Initially the doctor will take blood for tests including blood cultures.

- A blood test called a Full Blood Count (FBC) can indicate infection. Results should be available within a few hours.
- C-Reactive Protein (or CRP for short) is another marker for infection in the blood and can indicate an infection if the result is high. Results should be available within a few hours.
- Blood cultures take 36 hours to process, because the blood sample needs to be incubated to see if any bacteria grow.
- A chest x-ray may be done if we suspect a chest infection.
- We will explain your baby's results to you.

A further CRP will be done after the first 24 hours on antibiotics to check if the level is rising. A lumbar puncture may be considered if your baby has a rise in infection marker, your baby's clinical presentation will also be taken into consideration. A lumbar puncture involves taking a sample of fluid from your baby's back. This test result will also take 36 hours.

How is the medication given?

There will be a cannula inserted into your baby's vein so that the antibiotics can be given into the bloodstream – this is the best way to give antibiotics. A cannula is a thin tube which the doctor will insert into your baby's vein, either in the hand, the foot, or the arm. It will be secured with a bandage and will remain in place for the duration of your baby's treatment. It will be checked at regular intervals and replaced if the insertion site becomes red, swollen or if it stops working.

On some occasions, an injection into your baby's muscle might be required.

How long will my baby be on antibiotics?

This depends on the results we receive. The shortest time is 36 hours – at 36 hours the doctor will review the blood results and decide if a further course is required. This will be discussed with you, and you will always be kept informed.

Caring for your baby on antibiotics

If your baby is being treated for a neonatal infection, you should be able to have your baby with you on the postnatal ward and you can stay with your baby for the duration of their antibiotic therapy. You will be able to continue caring for and holding your baby according to your wishes. You can usually continue to breastfeed if this is your choice, and every effort will be made to help you with this. If your baby is temporarily unable to breastfeed, you will be given support to express your breast milk if you choose to do so.

If your baby's observations or blood results indicate an infection which needs more intensive treatment, your baby may need to be transferred to the neonatal unit. If this is the case, you will be able to visit your baby whenever you want to.

When I go home

Before you and your baby are transferred home from the hospital, you will be advised about the signs to look out for that may indicate your baby is unwell. You should seek urgent medical help (for example, from NHS 111, your GP, or an accident and emergency department) if you are concerned that your baby:

- is showing abnormal behaviour (for example, inconsolable crying or listlessness)
- is unusually floppy
- has an abnormal temperature unexplained by environmental factors (lower than 36°C or higher than 38°C)
- has abnormal breathing (rapid breathing, difficulty in breathing or grunting)
- has a change in skin colour (for example, where the baby becomes very pale, blue/grey or dark yellow)
- has developed new difficulties with feeding.

Where can I find out more?

The NHS website has more information about neonatal infection.

<https://www.nhs.uk/pregnancy/keeping-well/infections-that-may-affect-your-baby/>

The organisations below can give you more advice and support:

Bliss, 0500 618140

Group B Strep Support, 01444 416176

National Childbirth Trust (NCT), 0300 330 0700

National Breastfeeding Network, 0300 100 0212 (operated with the Association of Breastfeeding Mothers)

This leaflet based on NG195 Neonatal Infection: antibiotics for prevention and treatment (NICE 2024) and localised for use at Mersey & West Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust.

Whiston Hospital
Warrington Road,
Prescot, Merseyside, L35 5DR
Telephone: 0151 426 1600

Southport Hospital
Town Lane, Kew
Southport, PR8 6PN
Telephone 01704 547471

St Helens Hospital
Marshalls Cross Road,
St Helens, Merseyside, WA9 3DA
Telephone: 01744 26633

Ormskirk Hospital
Dicconson Way, Wigan Road,
Ormskirk, Lancashire, L39 2AZ
Telephone: 01695 577 111