

Care of Mom and Baby after Birth

There are a few routine treatments and tests that we offer for you and your baby after your birth in hospital. A few of these are listed and explained below. Please let us know if you have any questions about them.

What is the oxytocin injection for mom after birth for?

Oxytocin is a medication that is given by injection into your thigh upon delivery of your baby. This medication is meant to help contract your uterus, as well as help the placenta start to separate from the uterus after your baby is delivered. This helps to prevent possible heavier or prolonged bleeding (called post-partum hemorrhage). Heavy or prolonged bleeding can cause significant blood loss, sometimes requiring blood transfusion.

What is the vitamin K injection for baby for?

Vitamin K is needed to help our blood clot when we are cut or bruised. We cannot make vitamin K ourselves, instead we get it through our diet. Newborns often have low levels of vitamin K and their immature liver does not use vitamin K well yet. If vitamin K is not replaced, your baby is at risk for vitamin K deficient bleeding. This bleeding can cause mild to severe reactions for your baby ranging from bruising seen on the skin, to internal bleeding. This bleeding usually develops between 1-4 weeks of life and is mostly prevented by a vitamin K injection into your baby's thigh within in the first 6 hours after birth.

What is the erythromycin eye ointment for baby for?

The erythromycin eye ointment is used to decrease the risk of your baby developing a serious eye infection from gonorrhea, which is a sexually transmitted infection. If the baby is exposed to this infection during birth, an infection can cause permanent eye damage or blindness. The only way for a newborn to contract this type of pink eye is if the mother is infected however many people with gonorrhea do not have any symptoms. The eye ointment is used as an additional precaution: it is safe, easy to administer and effective at preventing serious eye infections.

Cutting the cord

Right after birth, if your baby is starting to cry and doesn't need any extra help to start breathing, we will put your baby skin-to-skin right onto your chest to hold. It has been shown that delayed cord clamping and cutting (waiting until 1-2 minutes after delivery) can increase the red blood cell volume and hemoglobin for newborns, and increase their iron stores in the first few months of life. If there are no problems with the cord or the health of your baby at delivery, delayed cord clamping should be possible, and we are happy to assist what ever family member or support person you would like to cut the cord

What is the metabolic screen?

This is a routine screening test that checks for a number of rare but serious genetic problems that can be treated if identified early after birth. This is a blood test done between 1-2 days old, in which a few drops of blood are taken from a small poke to your baby's heel.

What is a bilirubin level? Why do we do this?

Bilirubin is produced when the liver breaks down old red blood cells. Elevated bilirubin, also known as jaundice, can happen within the first few days of life. There are several causes for jaundice. Most often it is due to feeding difficulties and it will resolve as feeding is well established. However, there are other possible and more concerning causes for jaundice that we must keep in mind. Signs of jaundice include yellow colouring to your baby's skin and eyes, poor feeding, and fatigue. Mild jaundice in newborns does not usually cause problems, however severe jaundice can cause serious problems such as brain damage. We will keep a close eye on how your baby looks while in hospital, as well as monitor their daily weight to ensure they are not at increased risk of jaundice. If your baby looks jaundiced, we may take a blood sample to assess your baby's bilirubin level. If your baby's bilirubin is found to be high, we will either closely follow this level with a repeat blood test, or if the level is found to be above a certain cut-off, we will start light therapy for your baby in order to help decrease the bilirubin level in their blood.

What is the hearing screen?

A hearing screen is done on your baby in hospital prior to discharge as an attempt to detect newborns with hearing loss, which can impact lifelong development if not identified early. It is not painful for the baby.

What is the oxygen saturation test?

This is a simple test done to measure the level of oxygen in your baby's blood in their right hand and compare it to the level of oxygen in your baby's blood in one of their feet. This test is meant to screen for possible abnormalities to your baby's heart and major blood vessels ("congenital heart disease"), which otherwise may not become apparent until after you've left the hospital. Your nurse will perform this test prior to you leaving the hospital by placing an oxygen probe on your baby's limbs.

Car seat

The nurses will ask you to bring your car seat for your newborn into the hospital prior to going home, this is to ensure that the seat is an appropriate fit for your newborn and help you learn how to use it properly. There is also an option to be seen for a car seat safety check before having your baby through the Yukon Car Seat Safety Program (667-5832):

<http://www.hpw.gov.yk.ca/trans/transportservices/carseat.html>