



Early onset newborn infection: information for parents

Congratulations on the birth of your baby

This leaflet explains how we care for babies who may need extra checks or treatment for infection in the first few days of life.

What is early onset newborn infection?

Early onset newborn infection happens when a baby develops an infection within the first 72 hours after birth.

This is rare. Around **1 in 2,000 babies** are affected. However, it can sometimes be serious. Some babies have a higher risk of infection. It can still be difficult to know which babies will become unwell.

Because of this, we may treat your baby for infection until we can safely rule it out.

Why might my baby be at risk of infection?

Your baby may be at risk if they:

- Show signs that could suggest infection
- Have certain risk factors linked to infection

Risk factors for early onset newborn infection

Your baby may have a higher risk if:

- You carry a bacteria called Group B Streptococcus
- You have had a previous baby with early infection
- Your waters broke more than 24 hours before birth, or more than 18 hours if your baby was born early (before 37 weeks)
- You went into labour before 37 weeks
- You have, or are suspected to have, an infection during labour

How will my baby be monitored?

Your baby may need:

- Extra checks (enhanced observations), or
- Antibiotics

We will talk this through with you.

Extra checks (enhanced observations)

If your baby appears well, they will usually have **24–36 hours of extra checks**.

This means:

- You and your baby stay together on the ward
- The midwifery team checks your baby regularly
- A doctor reviews your baby each day

Signs of infection to look out for

Tell a member of staff if your baby has any of the following:

- Difficulty breathing
- A temperature that is too high or too low
- Very sleepy or floppy
- Poor feeding
- Pale or unusual colour
- Crying more than usual

If your baby remains well, you will be able to go home.

If your baby shows signs of infection, they may need blood tests and/or antibiotics. We will always discuss this with you before starting treatment.

Antibiotic treatment

Before starting antibiotics, we will take blood tests. These help us decide how long your baby needs treatment.

We will:

- Keep you updated
- Explain the results in plain language

Most babies can stay with you while receiving antibiotics.

Your baby will usually need antibiotics for at least **48 hours**.

Treatment may continue for up to **five days**, depending on test results and how your baby is.

Can my baby have antibiotics at home?

After two days of treatment, if your baby is well but still needs antibiotics, they may be able to go home.

They may be given oral (liquid) antibiotics for up to five days. Your doctor will only recommend this if it is safe.

We will arrange telephone follow-up to:

- Check your baby is improving
- Answer any questions

How do I give antibiotics at home?

Before you go home, staff will show you how to give your baby medicine safely.

We will support you until you feel confident.

For more information, scan the QR code in the resources section to access the *Medicines for Children* booklet.

What if my baby is sick after taking antibiotics?

If your baby vomits:

- **within 30 minutes:** give the same dose again
- **after 30 minutes:** do not give another dose and continue as normal

If your baby continues to be sick after taking antibiotics, contact your medical team.

When should I seek medical help?

Get medical help straight away if your baby has:

- Difficulty breathing
- A temperature that is too high or too low
- Unusual sleepiness or floppiness
- Poor feeding
- Unusual colour
- Excessive crying

Contact:

- Your GP
- NHS 111
- The Emergency Department (you may know this as A&E)

Who can I contact for advice?

If your baby is still having antibiotics and you are worried, contact the neonatal unit:

Heartlands Hospital

- 0121 424 3520
- 0121 424 3508

If your baby has finished treatment and you are concerned, contact:

- Your GP
- NHS 111
- The Emergency Department

Resources:



Medicines for Children booklet

University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Trust

Birmingham Heartlands Hospital
Bordesley Green
Birmingham, B9 5SS
Phone: 0121 424 2000

Good Hope Hospital
Rectory Lane
Sutton Coldfield, B75 7RR
Phone: 0121 424 2000

Accessibility

To view this information in a different language or use text-to-speech reader visit **www.uhb.nhs.uk**, click the yellow and black circular icon in the bottom right of the web page to open the ReachDeck toolbar and then use the search bar to search by the name of the leaflet. If you require this information in another format such as braille, please email interpreting.service@uhb.nhs.uk.



How did we do? 😊 😐 😞

If you have recently used our services we'd love to hear about your experience. Please scan the QR code or follow the link to share your feedback to help us improve our services. **Thank you.** www.uhb.nhs.uk/fft

