Monitoring blood sugar in at-risk newborn babies

Congratulations on the arrival of your new baby!

Why have I been given this information?

You may have been given this leaflet because your baby is at risk of low blood sugars or newborn hypoglycaemia. Normal newborn blood sugar should be above 2.6mmol/L.

Which babies are at risk of low blood sugar?

1. Babies less than 37 weeks gestation
2. Babies who have a low birth weight
3. Babies whose mothers are diabetic
4. If clinical staff feel your baby is at risk for another reason.

How do we monitor for low blood sugars?

If your baby is in one of the at-risk categories, the midwife looking after your baby will test their blood sugar between two to three hours after birth. They do this by pricking the baby on the heel, taking a very small blood sample and putting it through a hand-held machine to give an instant result.

How to avoid low sugars in your baby

Keep the baby’s temperature between 36.5°C-37.4°C

Within the hour after the baby is born, ask the midwife to help put the baby skin-to-skin on your chest. This will keep your baby calm, warm and stimulate them to feed. Put a hat on the baby and make sure that they are well wrapped up in blankets if in a cot. If the baby gets cold, the midwife will put the baby under a heater or in a heated cot to warm up.

Feed early

Ensure that baby is breastfed, or if this is not possible then with formula or expressed breastmilk within the first hour of birth.
Feed at least every 3 hours

Try to wake the baby up to feed once every three hours.

What happens if my baby has a low blood sugar?

If your baby’s blood sugar is less than 2.6mmol/L, you will be encouraged to feed your baby immediately. You may be advised to offer some infant formula if your baby is not breastfeeding well initially. This will usually only be for a few feeds and we will support you to continue to breastfeed your baby or to express your colostrum. Your baby’s blood sugar will be checked again before the next feed.

What happens if my baby’s blood sugar remains low?

Your baby may need to be transferred to the special care baby unit where they will receive further care to maintain their blood sugars. You will of course be welcome to the unit to continue to care for your baby.

When do we stop checking for low blood sugars?

Once your baby has had two blood sugars above 2.6mmol/L, we will stop checking them. When your baby is no longer at risk of low blood sugars, you should feed them three to four hourly.

What should I do next?

Make sure that your baby is feeding well e.g. you can hear them swallow during feeding and that they have 5-6 heavy wet nappies a day. Please refer to guidance in the discharge pack for further information.

Who should I contact if I have a problem or question?

For further support when you are at home, contact your community midwife or health visitor.

What should I do in case of an emergency?

In the case of an emergency, please contact your GP. If out of hours or your baby is very unwell, you should visit your local accident and emergency department.
Languages/ Alternative Formats

Please ask if you require this information in other languages, large print or audio format.
Please contact: 01895 279973

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Language別の翻訳、大きなフォント、または音声形式で、お問い合わせが必要な場合は、01895 279973に連絡してください。

Jeżeli chciałbyś uzyskać te informacje w innym języku, w dużej czcionce lub w formacie audio, poproś pracownika oddziału o kontakt z biurem informacji pacjenta (patient information) pod numerem telefonu: 01895 279973.

如果你需要這些資料的其他語言版本、大字体、或音頻格式，請致電01895 279 973 查詢。

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