

Low Blood Sugar In Newborn Babies

Information for parents

We have recommended your baby be closely monitored because he or she is at risk of, or has had a low blood sugar level.

Babies with a low blood sugar level may need to be admitted to the Newborn Intensive Care Unit (NICU) for treatment until their level reaches a normal range. However, many babies with low blood sugar are able to be with their mother on the ward. A baby who has had a low blood sugar level with no complications does not need special checks after leaving hospital.

What is wrong?

The lowest normal blood sugar level for a new-born baby is above 2.6mmol/L. This level of blood sugar is needed for the brain to function properly. It is important for your baby's level to be increased to the normal range as quickly as possible as untreated low blood sugar can result in brain damage.

Which babies are at risk?

Babies whose mothers had diabetes during pregnancy.

Sick babies, such as those who have an infection.

Premature babies, born earlier than three weeks before their due date (before 37 weeks gestation).

Small babies, less than 2500 grams, especially those who are smaller than average for the stage of their mother's pregnancy. These babies are considered to be small for gestational age (SGA) babies.

Big babies weighing over 4500 grams.

Is it serious?

Early contact with the Newborn Service means that all babies with low blood sugar receive prompt treatment so brain damage from this condition is rarely seen. By testing and monitoring your baby's blood sugar level we can provide treatment quickly if the level is low, to prevent any harm to the baby.

What tests are carried out?

Blood taken from a heel prick is tested to check your baby's blood sugar level.

Usually a test is carried out before a feed.

If the test result is low, the baby will need further tests until the blood sugar remains at a normal level with the usual amount of feeds for a newborn baby (breast or bottle without needing extra feeds).

What treatment may be needed?

If your baby's blood sugar level is a little bit low we recommend extra feeds.

If your baby's blood sugar is very low or if the extra feeds don't improve the level, a glucose solution is given intravenously to bring the baby's blood sugar level up to normal.