

## Parent/Carer advice sheet

### Infection Screening for Newborn Babies

You have been given this leaflet because there is concern that your baby is at risk of developing or is showing early signs of a potentially serious infection. If anything is unclear or you would like more information, please do not hesitate to ask us.

### What kinds of infection are we looking for?

Infections are seen more often in newborn babies because their immune system is not fully developed so they can become very sick if not treated early. Serious types of infection in newborn babies include pneumonia (chest infection), septicaemia (blood infection, which can lead to sepsis) and meningitis (infection in the fluid around the brain and spinal cord).

### What does an 'Infection Screen' involve?

All babies will have:

- **Regular checks** of heart rate, breathing rate and temperature
- **Insertion of a cannula** (IV line) in the back of the hand or foot
- **Initial blood tests** (taken from the cannula)
  - full blood count (FBC)
  - C-reactive protein (CRP - usually raised if an infection is present). This is repeated after 18 - 24 hours (usually from a heel prick)
  - blood culture (to look for septicaemia – this is usually the last result to come back and takes at least 36 hours)
- **Antibiotic blood levels** (if your baby needs more than 2 days of antibiotics)

Depending on the results, some babies will also need:

- **Chest x-ray** – to look for pneumonia
- **Lumbar puncture** - to look for meningitis. This is done by inserting a thin needle into the baby's lower back (similar to having an epidural) to collect a sample of spinal fluid.

We will talk to you about where the tests will be done and if you would like to be present.

### Why are intravenous antibiotics being given?

Babies can become very sick if not treated early and we do not want your baby to become unwell whilst waiting for the results. So even if your baby seems well, we do not wait for the test results before starting antibiotics. They are given into the cannula (intravenously) because they work more quickly and effectively that way. Most babies are given two different antibiotics which may be changed if tests suggest this is needed.

## Where will your baby be looked after?

Usually, your baby can stay with you on the post-natal ward and you can care for them as normal; extra care just needs to be taken to avoid dislodging the cannula when handling your baby. Occasionally, your baby may need to be admitted to the Neonatal Unit to be monitored more closely and to help with problems such as difficulties with feeding or breathing.

## When can your baby go home?

Your baby will be discharged when they are well and they have completed the course of antibiotics. For most babies this will be after about two days, but if your baby is still unwell or the tests suggest a serious infection, a longer course of antibiotics may be needed.

## What should you look out for after going home?

- Abnormal temperature  $<36.5^{\circ}\text{C}$  or  $>37.5^{\circ}\text{C}$  - this does not need to be routinely checked, only if your baby feels abnormally warm or cool or there are other concerns
- Fast breathing, recessing (sucking in of the skin under the lower margin of the ribs), additional noises while breathing or flaring of the nostrils
- Lethargy, abnormal movements, tense or bulging soft spot on top of the head, inconsolable crying or floppiness
- Change in skin colour
- Difficulties with feeding, discomfort after feeds or vomiting

If you are concerned about your baby, please contact your Midwife, Health Visitor or GP, or call 111. **If your baby seems very unwell - you must call 999.**

## How do I get more information?

- BLISS ([www.bliss.org.uk](http://www.bliss.org.uk))
- Group B Strep Support ([www.gbss.org.uk](http://www.gbss.org.uk))

## How can I help reduce healthcare associated infections?

Infection prevention and control is important to the well-being of our patients and for that reason we have infection prevention and control procedures in place. Keeping your hands clean is an effective way of preventing the spread of infections. Please follow our infection prevention and control guidelines when visiting our healthcare sites. Further information is available on our website.

## Patient Advice Sheet

If you would like a copy of this information on audiotape, in large print or translated, please call the Patient Advice Liaison Service on 01296 831120 or email [bht.pals@nhs.net](mailto:bht.pals@nhs.net)

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