

# Why is my baby on antibiotics?

## Information for parents



<b>My baby's antibiotics are due at:</b>	0600 and 1800	<input type="checkbox"/>
	1200 and 2400	<input type="checkbox"/>

### What are antibiotics and how are they given?

**Antibiotics** are a type of medication prescribed by doctors to treat **infections caused by bacteria**.

In newborn babies, it is especially important that these antibiotics work as quickly as possible. The most effective way of delivering antibiotics to treat a potential newborn infection is with **intravenous (IV) antibiotics** i.e. they are given **through a small tube (cannula)** inserted into a vein in the baby's hand, foot or arm.

### Why does my baby need antibiotics?

Babies have **immature immune systems** which make them **vulnerable to infection**. Without treatment, this can **quickly become serious**.

There are certain **risk factors** which increase the baby's risk of becoming unwell with an infection, such as:

- if **mum** has an **infection** (such as *Group B Streptococcus*) in her blood, urine or birth canal
- if **mum** has a **high temperature** during or within 24 hours of labour and requiring IV antibiotics
- if there is **prolonged rupture of membranes** i.e. if mum's waters broken more than 24 hours before birth (as this allows for spread of infection from vagina to the womb)
- if the baby is born **before 37 full weeks** of pregnancy (premature)
- if mum had a previous baby with a serious infection in the newborn period

### Why does my baby need antibiotics?

When the cannula is inserted, and just before the first dose of antibiotics are given, a sample of your baby's blood will be taken for the following tests:

- **Infection marker (CRP)**

This result is usually available within a few hours and is used to guide treatment. This may be repeated for monitoring.

- **Blood culture**

This is used to check for the presence of any bacteria in the blood. This result can take up to three days and your baby will need to continue antibiotics until this result is available.

If there is **any further cause for concern**, your baby may require additional tests such as:

- *Lumbar puncture (LP)*
- *Chest X-ray (CXR)*

The doctor will discuss this with you should these be necessary.

## **When can we go home?**

It is only natural to want to go home as soon as possible and we want to make sure you go home with a happy, healthy baby. Babies can become very sick very quickly so we are always cautious.

If your baby remains well in themselves and has no increase in the infection marker on the blood tests, we can usually stop the antibiotics within 2-3 days. If your baby does not appear well or the blood tests are abnormal, your baby is likely to need a longer course of antibiotics resulting in a longer stay in hospital.

When the antibiotics have been stopped, the cannula can be removed and if baby and mum are well with no other concerns you will be discharged.

## **When should we come back?**

Most babies do NOT need follow-up and should continue to have routine immunisations as normal.

However please call your midwife or come back to A&E if you notice any of the following:

- Poor temperature control (either being too hot or too cold)
- Not waking for feeds/difficult to rouse
- Floppy or stiff
- Poor feeding/vomiting
- Pale appearance
- Difficulty breathing
- A rash that does not disappear when pressed
- You are concerned that your baby is not behaving as normal.

## **PALS**

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) is a service that offers support, information and assistance to patients, relatives and visitors. They can also provide help and advice if you have a concern or complaint that staff have not been able to resolve for you. The PALS office is located on the ground floor of the Hambleton Wing, near the main entrance on Bessemer Road - staff will be happy to direct you.

PALS at King's College Hospital, Denmark Hill, London SE5 9RS

Tel: **020 3299 3601**

Email: **kch-tr.palsdh@nhs.net**

You can also contact us by using our online form at **[www.kch.nhs.uk/contact/pals](http://www.kch.nhs.uk/contact/pals)**

**If you would like the information in this leaflet in a different language or format, please contact PALS on 020 3299 1844.**

**[www.kch.nhs.uk](http://www.kch.nhs.uk)**