

# **Meconium and Newborn Babies**

## **Information for parents**

We have recommended your baby be closely monitored because the baby passed meconium before or during her or his birth.

### **What is wrong?**

Meconium is the name of the first bowel motion passed by a baby. It is thick, sticky and a blackish green colour.

A baby who is sick or under stress before or during the birth may pass meconium. This can become a problem for the baby as there is a risk of the meconium getting into the baby's lungs and causing breathing problems.

### **Is it serious?**

Breathing problems caused by the baby inhaling meconium are usually not serious.

However some babies can become seriously ill requiring intensive medical treatment if a lot of meconium is breathed into the lungs at or before birth.

### **What tests are carried out?**

Most babies will be closely monitored and observed for the first few hours to make sure they have no complications from inhaling meconium.

Sick babies will need blood tests and a chest x-ray.

The baby may have leads connecting him or her to machines that check the heart rate, breathing rate and level of oxygen in the blood.

## **What treatment may be needed?**

Blood tests will be done.

Most babies will need an intravenous (IV) drip and antibiotics to help prevent, or treat an infection.

Some babies may also need to be fed through an IV drip if they are breathing too fast and not able to feed properly.

Very sick babies may need oxygen as well as help with their breathing. Sometimes this involves the baby being connected to a ventilator machine, which breathes for the baby until they can manage breathing on their own.

## **How long will the baby need treatment?**

Babies with **mild** problems usually get better in 1 - 2 days. The baby may be able to be with his or her mother during this time, and feed normally.

Babies who are **very sick with severe problems** will take longer to recover and will require treatment in NICU.

## **Will the baby need special checks after leaving hospital?**

Babies who were not very sick will not need special checks after leaving hospital.

Very sick babies who were seriously ill from being exposed to meconium may need to have special checks after they leave hospital because their development may be affected. These arrangements will be discussed with you before your baby is discharged.

This leaflet provides a guide only. If you have concerns or want more information about your baby, ask the doctor or nurse providing your baby's care.