

Neonatal infection: antibiotics for prevention and treatment

Information for the public

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Preventing and treating bacterial infections in newborn babies

Bacterial infections can be serious for newborn babies, especially if they are not treated quickly. Some babies (including unborn babies) are more at risk of developing an infection and need extra care and monitoring. It is also important to take the right steps to prevent and treat infections for all mothers and their babies, before and after they are born.

We want this guideline to make a difference to families with newborn babies by making sure:

- better ways to prevent infection, especially in babies at risk, mean that fewer babies become ill
- signs of a bacterial infection are spotted sooner to avoid delays in treatment
- antibiotics are only used if they are really needed – otherwise they may not work as well in the future.

This guideline is only about infections caused by bacteria and does not cover viral infections.

Making decisions together

Decisions about treatment and care are best when they are made together. Healthcare professionals should give you clear information, talk with you about your options and listen carefully to your views and concerns.

They should also:

- always try to give you time to think and make choices about treatments for you and your baby, though in emergencies this isn't always possible
- explain what is involved, and why, if they are offering antibiotics for you or your baby to prevent infection
- make sure you know who to contact, and how to get in touch with them, if you are worried your baby could have an infection after going home.

If you don't understand the information you are given, tell your healthcare professional.

Read more about [making decisions about your care](#).

Where can I find out more?

The [NHS website](#) has more information about neonatal infection.

The organisations below can give you more advice and support.

- [Bliss](#), 0500 618140
- [Group B Strep Support](#), 01444 416176
- [National Childbirth Trust \(NCT\)](#), 0300 330 0700
- [National Breastfeeding Network](#), 0300 100 0212 (operated with the Association of Breastfeeding Mothers)

NICE is not responsible for the content of these websites.

To share an experience of care you have received, contact your local [Healthwatch](#).

We wrote this guideline with parents and carers of babies affected by bacterial infection and staff who treat and support them. All the decisions are based on the best research available.

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