

## **Eye Ointment For Newborns**

All newborns across Ontario are required by public health law to receive eye ointment within a few hours of birth. The rationale behind this law is to prevent eye infections. Caused by gonorrhoea or chlamydia, which can lead to blindness if left untreated. If the mother has gonorrhoea or chlamydia in her vaginal tract her newborn may be infected during the birth process.

A non-irritating antibiotic ointment of 0.5% erythromycin is used and is highly effective in preventing eye infections caused by gonorrhoea, and may provide some protection against chlamydial eye infections.

Whether you're at home or in the hospital, your midwife will delay the administration of eye ointment so that this treatment does not interfere with immediate parent-infant bonding. The ointment is commonly administered during the initial newborn exam, about two hours after birth.

As midwives, we believe that informed choice is fundamental to health care and therefore it is our responsibility to provide you with enough unbiased information so that you can make appropriate choices for you and your baby. The Health Care Consent Act of 1996, however, does not allow for choice with regard to newborn eye ointment.