

The term "eye prophylaxis" refers to a substance used to prevent the eye infection "Ophthalmia Neonatorum" in the newborn, which can cause eye injury or blindness. Oregon law requires health care providers to administer eye prophylaxis to each baby born, just in case the infant is at risk for developing an infection. The law does not require parents to give permission, however they can withhold permission.

A baby can become infected during childbirth as it passes through the birth canal. The two known causes of Ophthalmia Neonatorum are the sexually transmitted diseases Gonorrhea and Chlamydia. A vaginal culture can be taken during pregnancy to help determine if you carry either Gonorrhea or Chlamydia. However, a negative culture is no guarantee that you do not have one of the diseases, as they are often difficult to detect. If the baby does become infected with Gonorrhea or Chlamydia and is not treated, permanent eye damage, and even blindness, can result.

The most common treatment of Ophthalmia Neonatorum is an antibiotic ointment, Erythromycin. The law requires the attendant to place a small amount of ointment in the baby's eyes within two hours of the baby's birth. Other approved treatments include tetracycline ophthalmic ointment, and 1% silver nitrate solution.

The risks of all treatments are obscured vision for several hours, and reaction to the antibiotic. Because the antibiotic is administered locally in an ointment form, the risk of a negative reaction is extremely low. In addition, silver nitrate can cause irritation and burning to the surface of the eye.

Your midwives use Erythromycin Ophthalmic Ointment for eye prophylaxis treatment, and do not use silver nitrate solution for eye prophylaxis. As a parent you have the right to refuse permission for prophylactic treatment of your newborn.

Give permission to treat the baby per state health requirement

Run a vaginal culture for gonorrhea and chlamydia: treat the baby if culture is positive

Decline permission to treat the baby

Printed Name:

Signature:

Date: