

Eye Prophylaxis Informed Choice Agreement

Newborn babies born in US hospitals are typically given routine eye antibiotics – most of the time without parental knowledge of why this is done or their consent. As part of the midwifery standard of care, we believe that not only do parents deserve to know why this is done, but also to receive their consent or waiver regarding this choice.

The practice was started to prevent newborn blindness in babies born to mothers infected with Chlamydia and/or Gonorrhea, both sexually transmitted diseases. Of mothers that have Gonorrhea, 28% of babies will develop an eye infection. Of mothers with Chlamydia, 18-50% of babies will develop an eye infection. Since there was no way to know who was affected with these diseases (even if the women had been tested during sometime during her pregnancy), hospitals adopted the practice of administering these antibiotics prophylactically (as a preventative measure). Silver nitrate used to be common, but caused burning and redness in the baby's eyes as a result. Most practitioners now use antibiotic ointments.

Homebirth midwives have these same antibiotic ointments for clients that wish to have it available for their newborns. The ointment most commonly used is either Erythromycin .5% ointment or Tetracycline 1% ointment.

The disadvantages of using antibiotic ointment include:

- *Blurring of vision for newborn, which some would argue affects bonding
- *Bacterial resistance due to use of antibiotic

Should your baby develop an eye infection, antibiotic ointment can be used when symptoms develop. Some alternatives to using antibiotic ointment include:

- *Irrigate baby's eyes with sterile water and a sterile syringe
- *Use of breastmilk (and colostrum) in baby's eyes
- *Eye wash with Echinacea and eyebright infusion
- *Diluted povidone iodine solution rinse

I have read and understand this consent form and my questions/concerns have been answered to my satisfaction.

Please check one of the following:

[] *I desire to have eye prophylaxis ointment given to my newborn baby immediately after birth*

[] *I wish to decline eye prophylaxis ointment for my newborn baby immediately after birth*

Client Signature

Date Signed

Midwife Signature

Date Signed