

## Jaundice

Jaundice is a medical condition that causes yellowing of the skin or the whites of the eyes because of extra amounts of the pigment bilirubin. The most common causes are hepatitis, alcoholic liver disease, blockage of the common bile duct by a gallstone (<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/gallstones>) or tumor, or toxic reaction to a drug or medicinal herb.

Imaging examinations may be used to help diagnose jaundice, in addition to physical examination and laboratory tests.

In cases in which there are no known causes for jaundice, the usually appropriate initial imaging test is ultrasound (US) abdomen (<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/abdominus>) , CT abdomen (<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/abdominct>) with intravenous (IV) contrast, or an MRI abdomen (<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/mri-abdomen-pelvis>) without and with IV contrast with magnetic resonance cholangiopancreatography (<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/mrcp>) (MRCP; a special type of MRI that shows the liver, pancreas, bile ducts, and gallbladder). MRI abdomen without IV contrast with MRCP may be appropriate.

In cases in which a blockage of the bile duct is thought to be the cause, CT abdomen with IV contrast, MRI abdomen without and with IV contrast with MRCP, MRI abdomen without IV contrast with MRCP, or US abdomen is usually appropriate. Endoscopic retrograde cholangiopancreatography (ERCP; an invasive test using an endoscope to take x-rays) and US abdomen endoscopic (an invasive US done with an endoscope under general anesthesia) may be appropriate.

In cases in which the cause is thought to be a medical condition and not a blockage, MRI abdomen without and with IV contrast with MRCP, CT abdomen with IV contrast, or US abdomen is usually appropriate.

— By Patti Brossard, RT(R) ARRT, and Nina S. Vincoff, MD. This information originally appeared in the *Journal of the American College of Radiology*.

### Disclaimer

This information is copied from the RadiologyInfo Web site (<http://www.radiologyinfo.org>) which is dedicated to providing the highest quality information. To ensure that, each section is reviewed by a physician with expertise in the area presented. All information contained in the Web site is further reviewed by an ACR (American College of Radiology) - RSNA (Radiological Society of North America) committee, comprising physicians with expertise in several radiologic areas.

However, it is not possible to assure that this Web site contains complete, up-to-date information on any particular subject. Therefore, ACR and RSNA make no representations or warranties about the suitability of this information for use for any particular purpose. All information is provided "as is" without express or implied warranty.

Please visit the RadiologyInfo Web site at <http://www.radiologyinfo.org> to view or download the latest information.

**Note:** Images may be shown for illustrative purposes. Do not attempt to draw conclusions or make diagnoses by comparing these images to other medical images, particularly your own. Only qualified physicians should interpret images; the radiologist is the physician expert trained in medical imaging.

### Copyright

This material is copyrighted by either the Radiological Society of North America (RSNA), 820 Jorie Boulevard, Oak Brook, IL 60523-2251 or the American College of Radiology (ACR), 1891 Preston White Drive, Reston, VA 20191-4397. Commercial reproduction or multiple distribution by any traditional or electronically based reproduction/publication method is prohibited.

Copyright © 2025 Radiological Society of North America, Inc.