

Congenital Hypothyroidism

(kuhn-jen-i-til hi-poe-thigh-roid-iz-um)

What is a positive newborn screen?

Newborn screening is done on tiny samples of blood taken from your baby's heel 24 to 48 hours after birth. Newborn screening tests for rare, hidden disorders that may affect your baby's health and development. The newborn screen suggests your baby might have a disorder called congenital hypothyroidism.

A positive newborn screen does not mean your baby has congenital hypothyroidism, but it does mean your baby needs more testing to know for sure.

Your baby's doctor will help arrange for more testing for congenital hypothyroidism.

What is congenital hypothyroidism?

Congenital hypothyroidism affects the way the body makes special chemicals called hormones.

A person with congenital hypothyroidism doesn't make enough thyroid hormone because the thyroid gland did not grow or does not work properly. Without enough thyroid hormone, the body can have problems making energy and growing.

The word "congenital" means the problem starts at birth and is different from thyroid disease in adults. Congenital hypothyroidism is not usually passed on, or inherited, from a child's mother and father. Babies with birth defects like Down Syndrome and heart defects are more likely to have thyroid problems.

What problems can congenital hypothyroidism cause?

Congenital hypothyroidism is different for each child. Some children with congenital hypothyroidism have few health problems, while other children may have serious complications.

If congenital hypothyroidism is not treated, a child might develop:

- Developmental delay
- Jaundice (yellow-colored skin)
- Poor feeding
- Sleepiness
- Constipation
- Poor growth and weight gain

It is very important to follow the doctor's instructions for testing and treatment.

What is the treatment for congenital hypothyroidism?

Congenital hypothyroidism can be treated. The treatment is life-long. Treatment for children with congenital hypothyroidism includes:

- Daily medication to replace missing thyroid hormone

Children with congenital hypothyroidism should see their regular doctor and a pediatric endocrinologist (hormone specialist).

With prompt and careful treatment, children with congenital hypothyroidism live a healthy life, with normal growth and development.

Resources for parents

Genetics Home Reference
<http://ghr.nlm.nih.gov>

MN Newborn Screening Program
www.health.state.mn.us/newbornscreening

MN Children & Youth with Special Health Needs
 (651) 201-3650 or (800) 728-5420

Newborn Screening Program, 601 Robert St. N., St. Paul, MN 55155, Phone (800) 664-7772, Fax (651) 201-5471

