

CONGENITAL HYPOTHYROIDISM

You have just learned that your baby has congenital hypothyroidism (CH). CH can be controlled with the correct daily dose of synthetic thyroid hormone (a small sweet pill), blood tests, and regular checkups. Your baby will develop and grow like any other healthy child.

What is congenital hypothyroidism?

CH means that the baby is born with low amounts of thyroid hormones. The thyroid gland develops early in the pregnancy. It makes hormones that cause all parts of the body to grow and develop. It is especially necessary for brain development. If the thyroid gland does not form normally or is in the wrong position, it does not make enough thyroid hormones. This happens in about 1 in 4000 babies. It is not known why this happens — the parents did not do anything to cause it.

How do the doctors know your baby has this problem?

A blood test is done on all babies soon after they are born. The blood test results show your baby has CH. The doctor will repeat this test and may also use a scan or ultrasound to get more information about your baby's thyroid gland.

How is CH treated?

Your baby will take synthetic thyroid hormone every day, probably all his or her life. The doctor will do a check-up and blood test every 3 to 6 months, to be sure the dose is just right.

How do you give pills to a baby?

Crush and dissolve the tablet in a small amount (1/2 teaspoon) of breast milk, formula or sterile water. Do not use a soy-based formula (such as Isomil®, Alsoy® or ProSobee® for mixing with the tablet. Use an oral syringe (no needle), small spoon or medicine dropper to give the baby the dissolved tablet. **Do not put it in the bottle** — the baby may not take the whole bottle and then might not get the correct amount of thyroid hormone. When the baby gets older, you may put the tablet in his mouth and then give him the bottle or breast, and he will swallow the tablet whole. Give the baby the tablet at about the same time every day. If you forget to give the tablet, give it as soon as you remember. If you forget to give it for the whole day, give two pills the next day.

Are there any side effects of synthetic thyroid hormone?

There are no side effects when the dose is correct.

Synthetic thyroid hormone comes in several brands such as Synthroid® and Eltroxin®.