NATIONWIDE CHILDREN'S
When your child needs a hospital, everything matters.℠

Helping Hand™

Congenital Hypothyroidism

Hypothyroidism (HI poe THY roid ism) means an infant's level of thyroid hormone is low (*see* HH-I-343, *Hypothyroidism*). When a baby is born without enough thyroid hormone, it is called congenital hypothyroidism.

Every newborn in every state has blood work done at birth. The newborn screening test will find out if the blood levels of thyroid hormone are too low.

Low thyroid levels must be treated for your baby to grow and develop as he should.

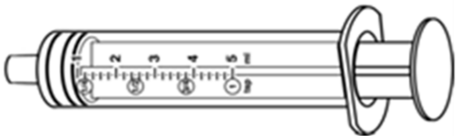
Symptoms of Congenital Hypothyroidism

Most babies do not have symptoms of low thyroid levels at birth. Symptoms that may develop soon after birth are:

- Yellow color (jaundice) of skin or eyes
- Feeding problems
- Constipation
- Loose muscle tone
- Enlarged tongue
- Hernia around the belly button

Treatment

Your baby will take medicine to replace the missing or low-level hormone. The name of the medicine is levothyroxine, also called Synthroid®. Since babies cannot swallow a pill, you can crush the pill. Mix it with a small amount of breast milk or formula. Give it to your baby with a needleless syringe (Picture 1) (See HH-V-240*, Thyroid Hormone Medicine.*) Do not put the medicine in the baby's bottle.



Picture 1 Needleless syringe for medicine

Follow-up Appointments

The doctor will see your baby every 2 to 3 months. Your baby will have blood tests at every visit to check the level of the hormone. This is to make sure the dose of medicine is correct. Your baby will likely need thyroid medicine and regular blood tests the rest of his life.

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