



Empowering Children. Supporting Families. Building Brighter Futures.

Resource 072 | Metabolic and hormonal conditions

Congenital hypothyroidism

What it means

Congenital hypothyroidism means inadequate thyroid hormone production or action from birth. Thyroid hormone is important for growth and brain development. Babies may initially show few symptoms, making newborn screening valuable. Prompt confirmation and treatment can greatly reduce developmental risk, with continued monitoring needed during growth. [1]

Causes and risk factors

Common causes include a thyroid gland that is absent, underdeveloped, or in an unusual location, and difficulties making thyroid hormone. Some causes are genetic; others are temporary. Less common forms involve hormone-control systems. The clinical team determines whether treatment is likely to be lifelong or temporary. [1,2]

General family education. A concern deserves assessment, but this guide does not diagnose a child or prescribe treatment.



Signs and everyday impact

A newborn may appear well despite low thyroid hormone. Possible signs include prolonged jaundice, unusual sleepiness, poor feeding, constipation, low muscle tone, or slower growth. Waiting for obvious symptoms can delay care. Later developmental concerns should still be assessed even after an earlier screening result. [1,2]

Assessment and diagnosis

An abnormal newborn screen requires timely confirmatory thyroid blood tests and clinical review. Screening is not a final diagnosis, and uncommon forms may not be detected by every screening program. A specialist determines the cause when useful and plans repeat tests to monitor treatment and growth. [1,2]

Treatment and therapy

Treatment usually involves prompt thyroid hormone replacement with levothyroxine, prescribed and adjusted by the clinical team. Blood tests guide dosing as the child grows. Families receive instructions on administration and factors that affect absorption. Developmental assessment and early support are added when needed. Do not change the dose or stop treatment without medical advice. [1,2,3]

Support at home

Give the prescribed medicine consistently using the team's instructions. Ask how feeding, other medicines, or supplements may affect administration. Keep blood-test appointments and discuss missed doses promptly. Track growth and developmental progress, and seek additional support when concerns arise rather than assuming treatment removes every possible difficulty.

When to seek help

Contact the clinical team promptly after an abnormal newborn screening result; do not wait for symptoms. Poor feeding, marked lethargy, worsening jaundice, or serious illness in a newborn requires urgent assessment.

Questions for your care team

- When are confirmatory tests and treatment needed?
- How should we give medicine and arrange monitoring?
- Is this likely to be permanent or temporary?



Podcast preparation

Use this outline to develop a later podcast script.

Suggested opening

Welcome to Mariel Early Intervention. Today we discuss congenital hypothyroidism. Congenital hypothyroidism means inadequate thyroid hormone production or action from birth. This is general education; each child needs individualized care.

Opening: Define the topic and its developmental context.

Understanding: Explain causes and signs without inviting self-diagnosis.

Assessment: Describe evaluation and distinguish screening from diagnosis.

Support: Discuss treatment, therapy, and practical family supports.

Closing: Explain urgent signs and one clear next step.

Misconception to address: Myth: a baby who looks well cannot have hypothyroidism. Screening can detect it before symptoms develop.

Before recording: update clinical references and local service details, arrange clinical review, and use fully consented or fictional examples.

Terms in plain language

- Thyroid hormone: a hormone supporting growth, metabolism, and development.
- TSH: a hormone that helps regulate thyroid function.
- Newborn screening: testing that identifies babies who need further assessment.

Sources and further reading

Sources accessed 3 October 2026. Numbered references support the clinical overview. Treatment availability and referral routes vary by country.

[1] Congenital Hypothyroidism

<https://newbornscreening.hrsa.gov/conditions/congenital-hypothyroidism>

[2] Congenital Hypothyroidism: Screening and Management - PubMed

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/36827521/>

[3] Assessing Developmental Delays in Children

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/toddler/Pages/Assessing-Developmental-Delays.aspx>