

Congenital Hypothyroidism (CH)

(Sounds like CON-GEN-IT-AL HYPE-O-THIGH-ROID-ISM)



What is newborn blood spot screening?

This is a blood test, from a heel poke, that is done a day or 2 after babies are born to test for treatable conditions including congenital hypothyroidism (CH) that you, your doctor, or midwife can't see by just looking at your baby. This screening test is different from those done during pregnancy.



What does it mean if my baby needs more tests for CH?

A baby needs to have more testing for CH when their screening test result is abnormal or positive. This doesn't mean your baby has CH. It means your baby has a higher chance of having the condition and will need more tests to find out if they have CH or not.

It's normal to feel worried if your baby needs more testing. Your specialists and other healthcare providers are there to support you. They'll explain what will happen and answer your questions.

What is CH?

Congenital (meaning "born with") hypothyroidism ("hypo" meaning "too low") is an endocrine condition that affects how your body makes special chemicals called hormones. Your thyroid gland is a butterfly-shaped organ in the front of the neck. It makes thyroid hormones. These hormones are needed for various processes in your body and help to keep them working properly. With CH, the thyroid gland can't make enough thyroid hormone. This can cause problems for health, growth and development.

What causes CH?

In most cases, the baby's thyroid gland didn't form fully or isn't located in its usual place in the neck. Less often, this means babies with CH are born with a gene from both parents, which has a change in it. In this case, the thyroid gland has formed but can't make thyroid hormone. CH isn't caused by anything that happened during pregnancy.

There may be no signs of CH at birth. It's important to remember that this condition can't be seen by looking at your baby.



What can I expect with more testing?

Everything that will happen with more testing will be explained to you. Your baby will need to have their blood tested to check for CH. Babies may need to have a thyroid gland scan to find out the size and location of the thyroid gland.

This testing may be done at a clinic in Edmonton or Calgary that specializes in CH. You may also be sent to a family doctor for testing.

What if more testing shows my baby has CH?

If testing shows that your baby has CH a specialized healthcare team will work with you to make a care plan for your baby. You and your baby will get the best care and support possible.



