



ANZSPED

AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND
SOCIETY FOR PAEDIATRIC
ENDOCRINOLOGY AND DIABETES

Want to know more about

Congenital Hypothyroidism



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What is congenital hypothyroidism?

Congenital hypothyroidism is when the thyroid gland does not make enough thyroid hormone (thyroxine) from birth. Thyroid hormone is important in children for brain development, growth and metabolism.

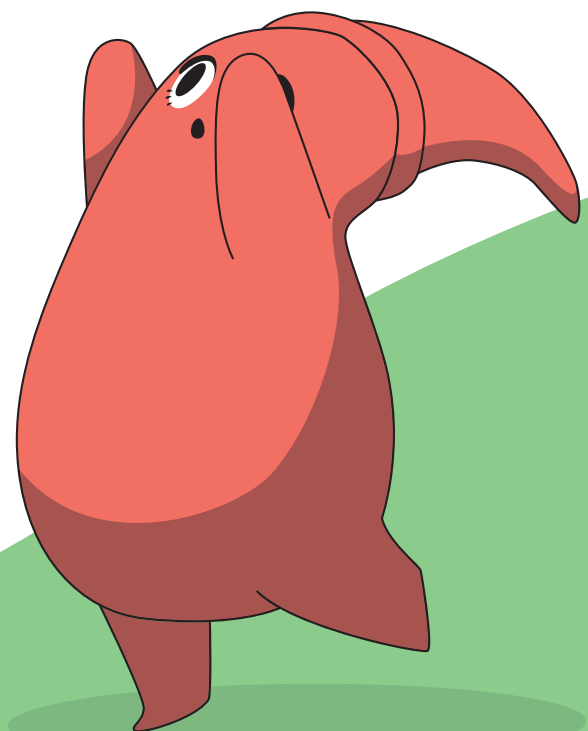
With early diagnosis and treatment, your baby should grow and develop normally. Without appropriate treatment your baby is at risk of long term problems with brain development and growth.

What causes congenital hypothyroidism?

Congenital hypothyroidism can occur if the thyroid gland does not form properly, is absent or does not make enough thyroid hormone. It may be permanent or temporary.

In most cases there is no known cause but in some cases it may be inherited.

Nothing that you did in pregnancy caused congenital hypothyroidism in your baby.



Thyroid gland

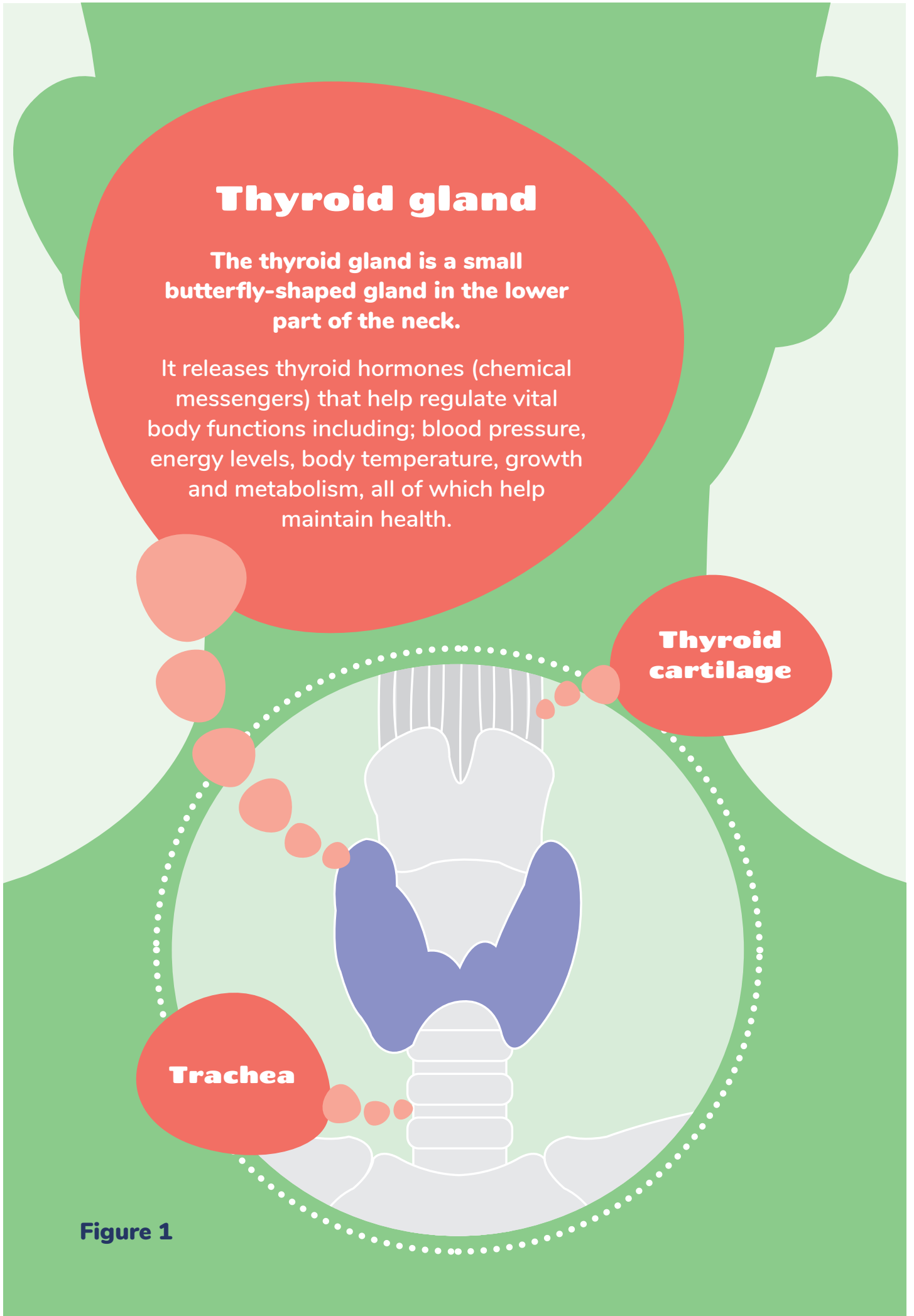
The thyroid gland is a small butterfly-shaped gland in the lower part of the neck.

It releases thyroid hormones (chemical messengers) that help regulate vital body functions including; blood pressure, energy levels, body temperature, growth and metabolism, all of which help maintain health.

Thyroid cartilage

Trachea

Figure 1



How common is congenital hypothyroidism?

Approximately 100 babies per year in Australia and 20-25 per year in New Zealand are born with congenital hypothyroidism. This is approximately 1 in every 2000-3000 babies.



How is congenital hypothyroidism diagnosed?

All babies in Australia and New Zealand are checked for congenital hypothyroidism as part of the newborn screening test. If the newborn screen suggests congenital hypothyroidism, your baby will need more tests to confirm the diagnosis.

Symptoms and signs of congenital hypothyroidism may include sleepiness, jaundice, dry skin, hoarse cry or an umbilical hernia. Doctors may check thyroid hormone levels if these symptoms are present.

How is congenital hypothyroidism treated?

It is easily treated with the thyroid hormone your baby can't make. The medication is called 'levothyroxine' and comes as a tablet. It is exactly the same as what the body makes.

Your child may need to be on this medication for life. They will need regular check ups and blood tests to monitor levels. As your child grows, their medication dose will likely change.

How do I give the medication?

The levothyroxine tablet can be crushed and dissolved in a small amount of water and given before a feed. Do not use milk, soy milk or formula and do not administer at the same time as iron supplements/ vitamins as these can affect the absorption of the medication.

Do not add the medication to a full bottle as your baby may not drink all of the bottle.

When children are older, we aim to give the medication 30 minutes before or 1 hour after food.

This is not always possible in babies so we recommend giving it at around the same time each day.

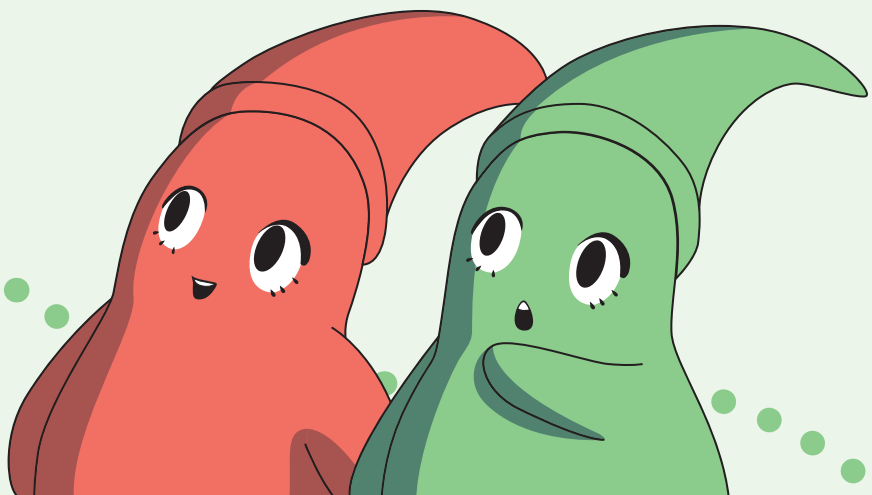
Does the treatment have side effects?

As the treatment is to replace a hormone normally made by the body, it is very unlikely to have adverse effects unless your child gets too little or too much medication.

Regular blood tests to monitor the thyroid hormone levels, and adjustments to the dose, will help keep levels in the normal range.

Symptoms of not enough medication include slow growth or development, sleepiness and/or constipation.

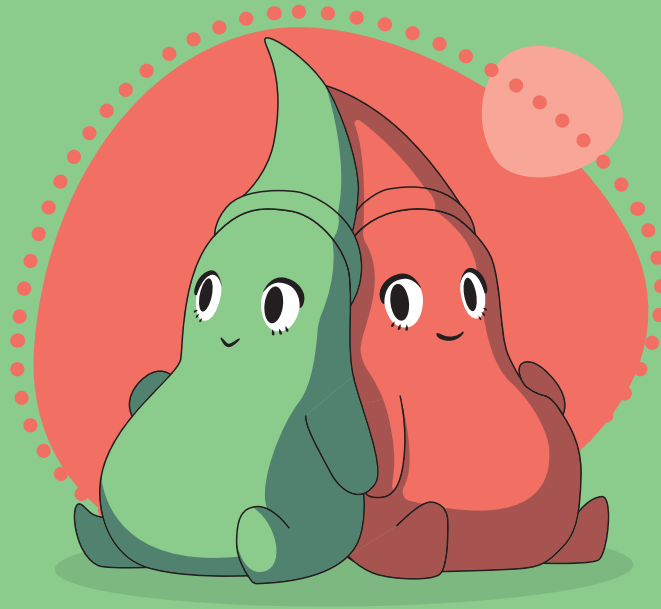
Symptoms of too much medication may include diarrhoea, restlessness, poor sleep and feeding and/or sweatiness.





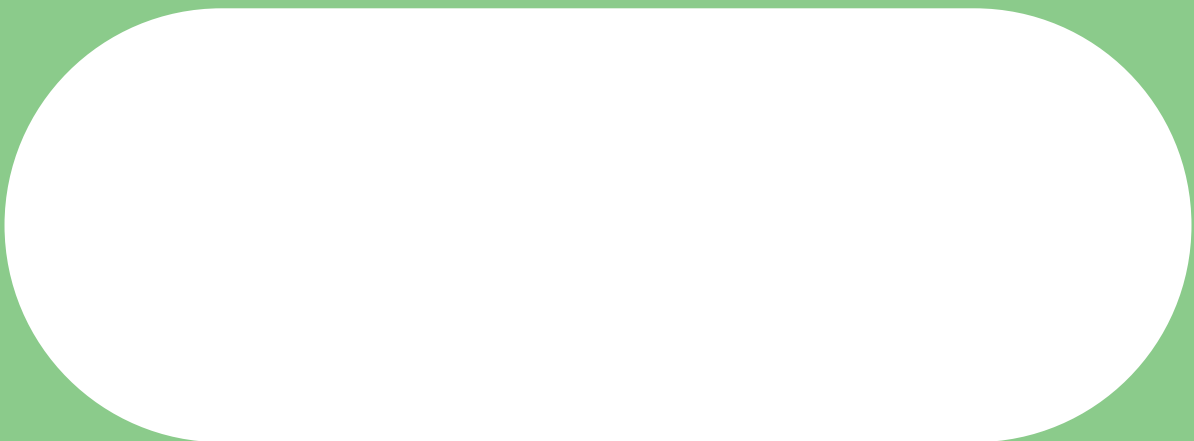
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Remember

Regular medication is important for your child's growth and development, and close review with your medical team is essential.



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