

Hypothyroidism and Pregnancy



WHAT IS A THYROID?

The thyroid is a small gland located in your neck. Your thyroid produces an important hormone that controls your body's growth and heat production. This hormone also controls your ability to get pregnant.

WHAT IS HYPOTHYROIDISM?

Hypothyroidism is a medical condition that occurs when your thyroid gland does not produce enough of the thyroid hormone.

Hypothyroidism occurs in about 4-17% of women during their childbearing years. If they are not treated, low thyroid hormone levels can cause problems in pregnancy and in your baby's development.

The information in this article can answer some questions about hypothyroidism during pregnancy. But, it should not replace the advice of your doctor or a certified nurse midwife.

MY DOCTOR TOLD ME THAT I HAVE HYPOTHYROIDISM. WHAT SHOULD I DO NOW THAT I AM PREGNANT?

- You should see your doctor or midwife as soon as you find out that you are pregnant. You should at least see your doctor before your 10th week of pregnancy. Ask how he or she plans to treat your hypothyroidism during your pregnancy.
- Try not to worry! With the right care and treatment, you have a good chance of having a healthy pregnancy and birth.
- Take your thyroid medicine each day as directed. Be careful not to miss a dose.
- Have your blood thyroid levels (TSH, T3 and T4) checked at least every 3 months. Have them checked more often if needed to keep them in normal range during your pregnancy.
- Expect that you may need to change the amount of your thyroid medicine during and after your pregnancy.



FOR MORE INFORMATION about pregnancy, call Care Management at 1.800.414.6580 (TTY: 1.800.473.0989).



DELAWARE HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES
Division of Medicaid & Medical Assistance

Hypothyroidism and Pregnancy

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PREGNANCY

800.414.6580

CAN LOW THYROID LEVELS INCREASE BABY'S RISK OF LOW IQ?

Babies born to mothers with untreated hypothyroidism during pregnancy are four times more likely to have low IQ or other learning problems. But, when the mother's thyroid levels are within a normal range, most children have IQ test scores that are similar to children born to mothers without thyroid problems.

I WORRY ABOUT TAKING MEDICINE WHILE I AM PREGNANT. IS IT REALLY SAFE TO TAKE MY THYROID HORMONE PILL?

It is safe and very important to take your thyroid replacement medicine when you are pregnant. These medicines (Synthroid, Levoxyl, Levothroid, Armour or Thyrolar) replace the normal hormones you need to have a healthy pregnancy.

IF YOU DO NOT HAVE ENOUGH THYROID HORMONE, YOU HAVE A HIGHER RISK OF:

- Miscarriage
- High blood pressure
- Preterm labor
- Problems with the baby's brain development

CAN I TAKE MY THYROID MEDICATION WITH MY PRENATAL VITAMIN OR WITH FOOD?

Prenatal vitamins, iron supplements, antacids and some foods get in the way of the body's

absorption of thyroid hormone. Your body must get enough thyroid hormone when you are pregnant. Take your thyroid medicine on an empty stomach at least one hour before or two hours after meals.

Do not take prenatal vitamins or antacids within two hours of taking your thyroid medicine. Be consistent. If you have to take your thyroid pill with food, it is better to take it every day with food than to not take it at all some days. Tell your doctor if you can't keep your thyroid pill down because of morning sickness.

I HAVE HEARD ABOUT THE MANY BENEFITS OF BREASTFEEDING. CAN I NURSE MY BABY WHILE TAKING THYROID MEDICINE?

Yes. Breastfeeding or nursing is the healthiest way to feed your baby. Mothers can continue to take thyroid medicine while nursing. They should also check their blood thyroid levels while nursing. Thyroid medicine will not hurt your baby if you take the right dose. Your body will make plenty of breast milk for your baby if you have a normal amount of thyroid hormone.

WILL MY BABY HAVE HYPOTHYROIDISM TOO?

All babies are tested for hypothyroidism right after they are born. Hypothyroidism is very rare in infants and children. If thyroid disease is passed on genetically (from a parent or relative), it usually does not appear until later in life.