

Thyroid disease and children – What every parent should know



Did you know?

- Thyroid problems can have a major impact on both the physical and mental development of your child if left untreated or not treated appropriately.
- Effective treatments are available and acting early is essential to avoid long term issues
- Thyroid problems tend to run in families, be watchful of your child's development if you suffer thyroid problems¹

Common thyroid problems

Children most commonly suffer from either an underactive thyroid (hypothyroidism) which slows down metabolism, or an overactive thyroid (hyperthyroidism) which causes the metabolism to speed up.^{2,3}

What to look for?

It is vital that parents understand the signs and symptoms of the key thyroid problems to help ensure children get the support and treatment they need.

Symptoms of an underactive thyroid in children can vary depending on age, however commonly include:^{4,5}

- Prolonged jaundice in babies
- Stunted bone / teeth growth
- Learning difficulties
- Delayed puberty

Common symptoms an overactive thyroid in children include:⁴

- Changes in behaviour / school performance
- Sleeplessness
- Restlessness
- Irritability

Speak to your doctor if your child is experiencing any of the above symptoms and you are worried about their health.

Help is at hand

Parents can be reassured that thyroid problems can be well treated, allowing children to live happy and healthy lives.

- An underactive thyroid is treated by replacing a child's missing thyroid hormone with a medication; levothyroxine is the most established treatment.⁴
- Children with an overactive thyroid are treated to reduce the amount of thyroid hormone present in their blood stream. Anti-thyroid medications can be used but in case the child is allergic to medications, surgery may be a therapeutic option.⁴

Keeping a watchful eye

It is important parents monitor their child's physical and mental development; seeking medical advice if they have any concerns.

If your child is diagnosed with a thyroid disorder, keep track of their treatment and thyroid hormone levels – this can be done through a simple blood test every 3–6 months.¹

It can be difficult for teachers and classmates to understand a 'hidden' condition such as thyroid disease. Therefore, it is recommended you inform your child's school /nursery of their condition in case of any special needs or medication requirements and in order to avoid any misunderstanding of their symptoms.

For further information

If you would like any further information on thyroid problems, please visit the following websites:

- www.thyroidweek.com
- www.thyroid-fed.org



References

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an initiative supported by

