

Why Retest For Hemoglobin E-Beta Thalassemia?



Since your baby's initial screening test results indicate the presence of an unusual hemoglobin, your baby needs to be retested as soon as possible. In most cases further testing will show the baby does not have a hemoglobin disorder. If retesting shows that your baby does have a hemoglobin disorder, treatment can be done to help your baby grow and develop normally.

California state law requires that all babies have the newborn screening test before leaving the hospital. A few drops of blood were taken from your baby's heel and tested for many inherited diseases including hemoglobin disorders. Inherited means the disease is passed down in the genes from both parents to the child. Genes determine features such as eye color, height, and hemoglobin type.

Babies can look healthy at birth and still have one of these disorders. If untreated, these disorders can cause serious health problems.

Why Should My Baby Be Retested?

The Newborn Screening Program has reported a "positive" screening test result for hemoglobin E for your baby. Your baby now needs retesting as soon as possible to find out if the baby has hemoglobin E-beta thalassemia which requires early and ongoing treatment. However, most babies with an initial positive screening result will not have a disorder.

What is Hemoglobin?

Hemoglobin is a special protein inside our red blood cells. Red blood cells have an important job. They pick up oxygen from the lungs and take it to every part of the body. It is the hemoglobin in the red blood cells that actually carries the oxygen. There are many different types of hemoglobin. The most common is hemoglobin A. Another type is hemoglobin E.

Hemoglobin E is common in people of Southeast Asian ancestry including Thailand,

Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. People whose ancestors are from southern China, Philippines, India and Turkey may also have hemoglobin E. Although it is more common in these groups, it could be found in anyone.

What is Hemoglobin EE?

Most babies with an initial positive result for hemoglobin E will have repeat test results that show hemoglobin EE.

A person with hemoglobin EE may have mild anemia. This causes no serious health problems. However, the red blood cells will be smaller than usual. This is often mistaken for iron deficiency anemia. People with hemoglobin EE should have testing for the amount of iron in their blood to find out if they need to be treated with iron supplements.



Treatment can be done to help children with hemoglobin E-beta thalassemia grow and develop normally.

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