

Unidentified Hemoglobin Traits

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Congratulations on the birth of your new baby! As part of the routine newborn screen, Utah tests all babies for sickle cell disease and other serious inherited hemoglobin problems. Sometimes, in the process of looking for serious problems, we find babies who are carriers of unusual hemoglobin types. On your baby's newborn screening test a different kind of hemoglobin was found. This guide will help answer some of your questions. It should not take the place of an informed discussion with your medical home (doctor).

Is my baby sick?

No. An unidentified hemoglobin trait is not an illness. Your baby is healthy.

How did my baby get an unidentified hemoglobin trait?

Hemoglobin type, like hair color and height, is passed down in the family through genes. An unusual hemoglobin type occurs when a baby gets one normal hemoglobin gene from one parent, and one unusual hemoglobin gene from the other parent. People who have a trait are sometimes called silent carriers.

Why can't my baby's hemoglobin trait be identified?

There are many different types of unusual hemoglobin. Most types don't cause any problems. Only some of the hemoglobin types have been identified and named.

As your baby grows, it may be easier to identify the unusual hemoglobin trait. It is also possible that your baby's unidentified trait could disappear as your baby begins to make adult hemoglobin. For these reasons, your doctor may want to retest your baby in about a year.

Can an unidentified hemoglobin trait ever turn into a disease?

Never. Your baby's hemoglobin gene will not change. It remains the same for life.

Is there anything a person with an unidentified hemoglobin trait should do?

If you need more information about unidentified hemoglobin traits, talk to your doctor.

You may also want to have a genetic consultation for your family to see how an unidentified hemoglobin trait might affect future children, or your grandchildren.

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