

HYPOPARATHYROIDISM



BASIC INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION

The parathyroid glands lie within the thyroid glands in the neck. They produce parathyroid hormones, which along with vitamin D and calcitonin (a hormone produced by the thyroid gland), regulates the calcium level in the body. With hypoparathyroidism, there is a decreased production of hormones by the parathyroid glands causing a low level of calcium in the blood. The disorder is rare and affects children more often than adults.

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Acute phase:

- Tetany (painful cramp-like spasms of the face, hands, arms, and sometimes feet).
- Tingling and numbness in feet or hands.

Chronic phase:

- Scaling skin.
- Splitting nails.
- Poor tooth development.
- Seizures.
- Mental retardation in children.
- Psychosis in adults.

CAUSES

- Complication of surgery on the parathyroid glands, the thyroid glands, or other neck tissues.
- Genetic autoimmune disorder (possibly).
- Radiation of the thyroid gland.
- Hemochromatosis (disease in which excessive iron accumulates in the liver).
- No apparent reason (sometimes).
- Occasionally the parathyroids are absent from birth.

RISK INCREASES WITH

Neck surgery or trauma.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

There are no specific preventive measures.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- This condition is currently considered incurable. It requires lifelong replacement therapy to control symptoms. Without treatment, it is fatal.
- Scientific research into causes and treatment continues, so there is hope for increasingly effective treatments and a cure.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Cataracts.
- Brain damage.
- Heartbeat abnormalities and congestive heart failure.
- Difficulty breathing.
- Malformation of teeth.
- Seizures.



DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT

GENERAL MEASURES

- Your health care provider may do a physical exam. Medical tests may include blood and urine studies, ECG (electrocardiogram—method of diagnosing heart diseases by measuring electrical activity of the heart), CT, and x-rays of bones to detect increased bone density.
- If you are suffering an acute attack of tetany (see Symptoms), you may need hospital care for calcium injections to provide quick relief.
- For self-care, if muscle cramps start, place a paper bag over your mouth. Blow into it and rebreathe your breath. This will raise carbon-dioxide levels in the blood and decrease muscle spasms.
- Apply lubricating creams or ointments to dry, scaling skin.
- Keep nails trimmed to prevent splitting.
- Get periodic medical tests to check calcium levels in your blood. It is important to remember to have these tests done on time.

MEDICATIONS

- Vitamin D and calcium supplements are normally prescribed. A lifelong course of these drugs is necessary.
- Intravenous (IV) calcium may be given for severe muscle spasms.
- Other drugs for treating muscle spasms may be prescribed.

ACTIVITY

No limits.

DIET

A high-calcium, low-phosphorus diet may be helpful. Your health care provider will advise you of special diet needs.



NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or a family member has unexplained muscle spasms of the hands, feet, or throat, or numbness, or tingling in the hands or feet.
- Muscle spasms do not decrease in 1 week, despite treatment.

Special notes:

More notes on the back of this page