



Newborn Screening FACT Sheet

Galactosemia (GALT)

What Is GALT?

GALT is a rare, inherited problem. It is caused when the body can't break down galactose. Galactose is a sugar found in milk and milk products.

What Causes GALT?

Breast milk and most infant formulas have a sugar called lactose. The body breaks lactose down into sugars called glucose and galactose. Galactose must be broken down more before the body can use it for energy. An enzyme called galactose-1-phosphate uridyl transferase helps do this. Enzymes help start chemical reactions in the body. Most people with GALT don't have this special enzyme. This causes galactose to build up in the body.

What Symptoms or Problems Occur With GALT?

[Symptoms are something out of the ordinary that a parent notices.]

High levels of galactose poison the body and cause these serious problems:

- ♦ swollen liver
- ♦ kidney failure
- ♦ stunted growth and mental retardation
- ♦ cataracts in the eyes

Children and young adults treated for GALT may still have problems over the years with:

- ♦ speech
- ♦ language
- ♦ hearing
- ♦ clumsiness with hands
- ♦ bleeding in the gel-like part of the eye
- ♦ tremors (shaking)
- ♦ stunted growth
- ♦ learning disabilities

What is the Treatment for GALT?

Special Diet – The treatment for GALT is to limit galactose and lactose from the diet for life. All milk and all foods that have milk in them must not be used at all. This includes any kind of milk, such as cow's milk, goat's milk, and human breast milk. Your child should also not eat dairy products like butter, cheese, and yogurt. Other foods with small amounts of milk products must also not be eaten. These include foods with whey, casein, and curds.

Things to Remember

Children with GALT should be in the care of a doctor who specializes in the treatment of GALT. You will also have a dietitian who will teach you about special diets for your child. Dietitians know the right foods for your child to eat.

Read labels carefully when you shop for your child's food. Many prepared foods have hidden ingredients that contain galactose.

Many medicines contain fillers that include galactose. It is important to ask the doctor and pharmacist about this for any medicines prescribed for your child.