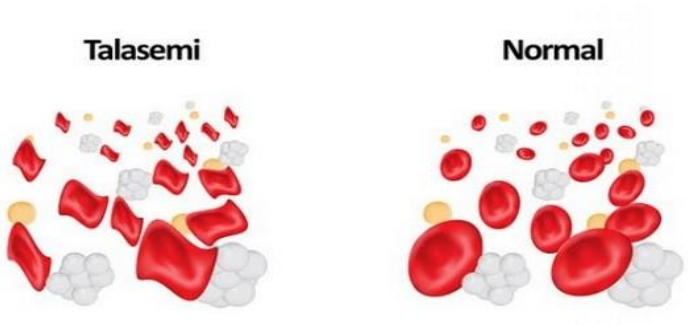
‘Thalassemia’

What is thalassemia?

Thalassemia is an inherited blood disorder in which the body makes an abnormal form of hemoglobin. Hemoglobin is the protein molecule in red blood cells that carries Oxygen. The disorder results in excessive destruction of red blood cells, which leads to anemia. Anemia is a condition in which your body doesn’t have enough normal, healthy red blood cells.

Thalassemia is inherited, meaning that at least one of your parents must be a carrier of the disease. It’s caused by either a genetic mutation or a deletion of certain key gene fragments.



What are the symptoms of thalassemia?

The symptoms of thalassemia can vary, some of the most common ones include:

- Bone deformities, especially in the face
- Dark urine
- Delayed growth and development
- Excessive tiredness and fatigue
- Yellow or pale skin

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), thalassemia is most common in people from Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Mediterranean countries such as Greece and Turkey.

What are the different types of thalassemia?

Beta thalassemia, which includes the subtypes major and intermedia.

Alpha thalassemia, which include the subtypes hemoglobin H and hydrops fetalis.

How is thalassemia diagnosed?

If your doctor is trying to diagnose thalassemia, they'll likely take a blood sample. They'll send this sample to a lab to be tested for anemia and abnormal hemoglobin. Abnormally shaped red blood cells are a sign of thalassemia. Depending on the type and severity of the thalassemia, a physical examination might also help your doctor make a diagnosis.

What are the treatment options for thalassemia?

The treatment for thalassemia depends on the type and severity of disease involved. Some of the treatments include:

- Blood transfusions
- Bone marrow transplant
- Medications and supplements
- Possible surgery to remove the spleen or gallbladder

How does thalassemia affect pregnancy?

Thalassemia also brings up different concerns related to pregnancy. The disorder affects reproductive organ development. Because of this, women with thalassemia may encounter fertility difficulties.

Pregnancy carries the following risk factors in women with thalassemia:

- A higher risk for infections
- Gestational diabetes
- Heart problems
- Hypothyroidism, or low thyroid
- Increased number of blood transfusions
- Low bone density

How do you manage thalassemia?

Since thalassemia is a genetic disorder, there's no way to prevent it. If you have thalassemia, your outlook depends on the type of the disease. People who have mild or minor forms of thalassemia can typically lead normal lives. In severe cases, heart failure is a possibility. However, there are ways you can manage the disease to help prevent complications. In addition to hepatitis vaccines and ongoing medical care, diet and exercise may also be helpful.

A low-fat, plant-based diet is the best choice for most people, including those with thalassemia. Be sure to discuss any dietary changes with your doctor ahead of time.

Work Cited

I. Description on Alpha thalassemia. Published: Jan 30, 2018. Citation on Genetics Home Reference (ghr.nlm.nih.gov/condition/alpha-thalassemia). Accession Date: Feb 6, 2018.

II. Description on Beta thalassemia. Published: Jan 30, 2018. Citation on Genetics Home Reference (ghr.nlm.nih.gov/condition/beta-thalassemia). Accession Date: Feb 6, 2018.

III. Description on Beta thalassemia (Cooley's anemia) in children. Citation on Stanford Children's Health. (stanfordchildrens.org/en/topic/default?id=beta-thalassemia-cooleys-anemia-in-children-90-P02330). Accession Date: Feb 6, 2018.

IV. Facts about thalassemia. Updated on: May 24, 2016. Citation on centers for disease control and Prevention. (cdc.gov/ncbddd/thalassemia/facts.html). Accession Date: Feb 6, 2018.

V. Learning about thalassemia. Updated on: December 27, 2013. Citation on National Human Genome Research Institute. (genome.gov/10001221). Accession Date: Feb 6, 2018.

VI. Thalassemia: Healthy living. Updated on: Oct 18, 2017. Citation on centers for disease control and Prevention. (cdc.gov/ncbddd/thalassemia/living.html). Accession Date: Feb 6, 2018.