

Hormone Disorders

# Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia

Patient's Guide



Easy readability



## Hello!

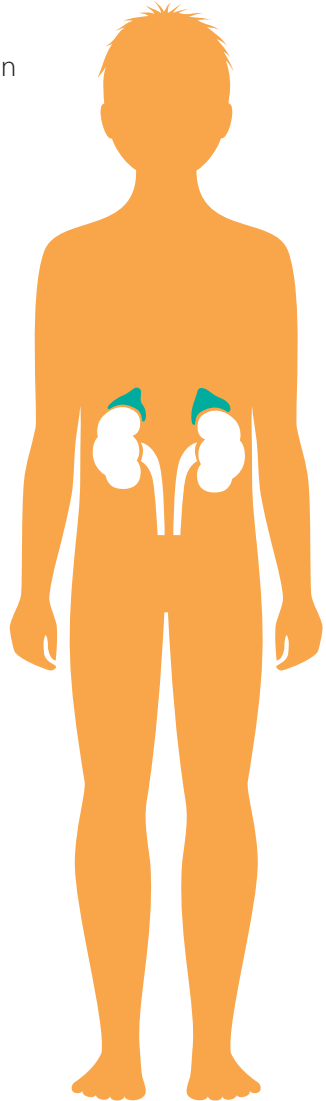
Today we'll tell you about a problem called **congenital adrenal hyperplasia** or CAH. You may think that it sounds a bit difficult, but do not worry! We'll tell you what it means, why it happens and how doctors treat it.

Let's start by first talking about an organ in your body called the **adrenal glands**. These glands are a pair of small organs, which lie above the kidneys.

The adrenal glands act like the **"boss"** by telling the rest of the organs to do 3 things:

1. **To keep the right amount of sugar in the blood.**
2. **To keep the right amount of salt in the body.**
3. **To make the body grow.**

The adrenal glands order the rest of the organs by sending special messengers to them. These messengers are called **hormones** and tell the organs when and how much to work.



For each of these 3 jobs only **one type** of hormone is sent. This means that there is one hormone for controlling the sugar in your blood, one to control the salt in your body, and one to help your body grow.



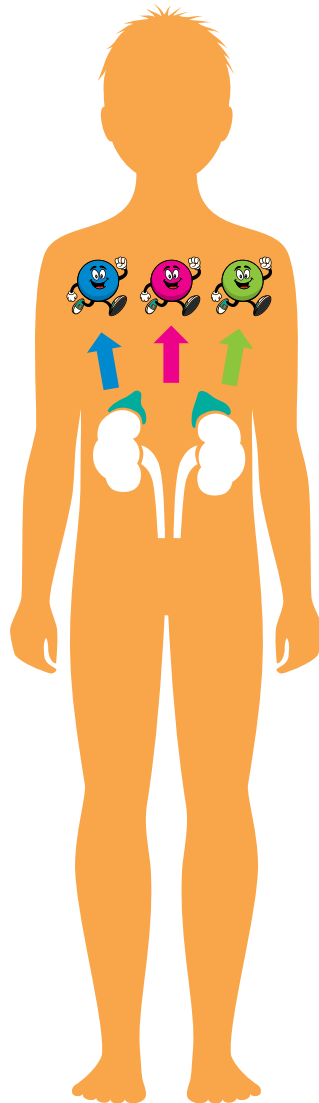
Hormone for salt



Hormone for growth



Hormone for sugar





## What is CAH?

CAH is a problem in which the adrenal glands send too many hormones for body growth and no hormones for sugar and salt control!

This means that your body will start growing faster than normal. You may also lose too much salt and may not have enough sugar in your blood.

## How does CAH affect boys and girls?

As you already know, CAH occurs because the adrenal glands are sending too many hormones for body growth. This will make all children grow faster than normal. Also, it will affect boys and girls in different ways:

- **In boys:** early muscle development, enlarged penis and hair in the armpits and around the penis.
- **In girls:** hair in the armpits and near the vagina, too much body hair growth and a deep voice

## How is CAH treated?

Doctors can treat CAH with special medicines. These medicines correct the amount of hormones produced by the adrenal glands. As a result, you will have the right amount of hormones to grow normally. This will also help your body to stop losing salt and to keep the right amount of sugar in the blood.



This medicine is given in tablets and you may need to take them everyday for all your life. The amount of medicine that you need will depend on your body size. Your doctor will tell you how much is needed and how to take it.

## **What tests are needed during treatment?**

It is very important that your body receives the right amount of medication. To make sure this is the case, blood and urine tests will be done.

For the blood test, the doctor will take a bit of your blood by using a needle.

For the urine test, you will have to go to the toilet and fill a small plastic cup with urine. These two tests are very simple and you will not need to stay in hospital very long!

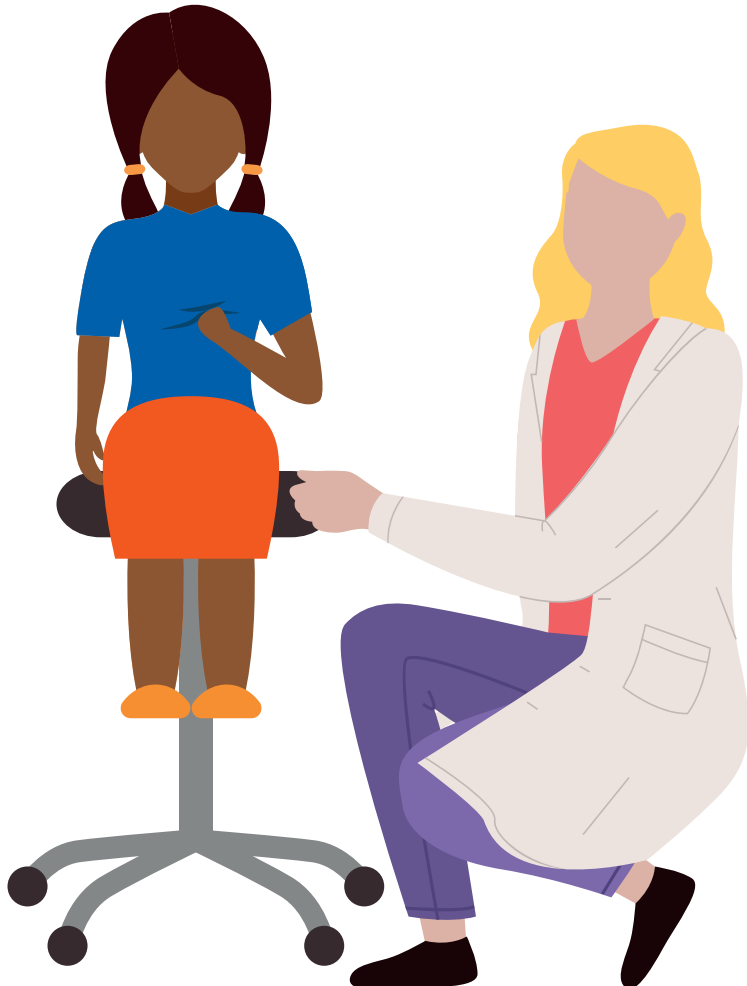
## **Is an operation needed for CAH treatment?**

In girls an operation may be needed. This operation is to correct the size or position of the vagina when you are older. If you require this operation, the doctor will talk about this with you and your mum or dad.



## Congratulations!

If you have not understood some things in this leaflet, don't feel shy to ask your doctor or other friendly people in the hospital. They will happily explain these or any other questions you may have.



# Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia

(Revised November 2019)

This leaflet is part of the **Hormone Disorders Series**

The following are also available:

Growth Hormone Deficiency

Puberty and the Growth Hormone Deficient Child

Precocious Puberty

Emergency Information for Children with Cortisol and GH Deficiencies and those Experiencing Recurrent Hypoglycaemia

Growth Hormone Deficiency in Young Adults

Constitutional Delay of Growth and Puberty

Multiple Pituitary Hormone Deficiency

Diabetes Insipidus

Craniopharyngioma

Intrauterine Growth Retardation or Small for Gestational Age

Hyperthyroidism

Hypothyroidism

Type 2 Diabetes and Obesity

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