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Gilbert syndrome

Gilbert syndrome is a common disorder passed down through families. It affects the way bilirubin is processed by the liver, and may cause the skin to take on a yellow color (jaundice) at times.

Causes

Gilbert syndrome affects 1 in 10 people in some white groups. This condition occurs due to an abnormal gene, which is passed from parents to their children.

Symptoms

Symptoms may include:

- Fatigue
- Yellowing of the skin and whites of the eyes (mild jaundice)

In people with Gilbert syndrome, jaundice most often appears during times of exertion, stress, and infection, or when they do not eat.

Exams and Tests

A blood test for bilirubin shows changes that occur with Gilbert syndrome. The total bilirubin level is mildly elevated, with most being unconjugated bilirubin. Most often the total level is less than 2 mg/dL, and the conjugated bilirubin level is normal.

Gilbert syndrome is due to a genetic change, but genetic testing is not needed.

Treatment

No treatment is necessary for Gilbert syndrome.

Outlook (Prognosis)

Jaundice may come and go throughout life. It is more likely to appear during illnesses such as colds. It does not cause health problems. However, it can confuse the results of tests for jaundice.

Possible Complications

There are no known complications.

When to Contact a Medical Professional

Contact your health care provider if you have jaundice or pain in the abdomen that does not go away.

Prevention

There is no proven prevention.

Alternative Names

Icterus intermittens juvenilis; Low-grade chronic hyperbilirubinemia; Familial non-hemolytic-non-obstructive jaundice; Constitutional liver dysfunction; Unconjugated benign bilirubinemia; Gilbert disease; Gilbert's syndrome

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