

SYMPTOMS OF β THALASSAEMIA MAJOR

- Without regular blood transfusions, patients will be pale-looking and easily fatigued, they have poor appetite and frequent infections. Their liver and spleen are often enlarged.



ESSENTIAL TREATMENT FOR β THALASSAEMIA MAJOR

Regular Blood Transfusions

- Usually once every 4 weeks to sustain life resulting in iron overload which may:
 - damage the heart and liver.
 - cause stunted growth, delayed puberty, diabetes and other endocrine complications.

Iron Chelation

- Desferal (iron removing drug) is administered over 10 hours each night, 5 to 6 nights per week.
- Desferal is injected slowly via an electrical pump.

Oral Chelator – L1

- A new iron chelating agent that can be taken by mouth is now available. Due to consideration for safety and efficacy, it can only be used as a second-line treatment for older patients.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO PREVENT THALASSAEMIA MAJOR?

Family Planning

- Special blood screening test or premarital test is available to find out whether you and your partner are Thalassaemia carriers.
- Consult your doctor for more information about Thalassaemia.

Prenatal Checkup

- If you and your partner are Thalassaemia carriers, consult your obstetrician regarding prenatal diagnosis.
- Available prenatal tests are done at optimum time. The following will identify the fetus with Thalassaemia Major:

1. Chorionic Villi Sampling

This test is performed from 10th to 12th week of pregnancy. It looks at cells taken from the placenta.

2. Amniocentesis

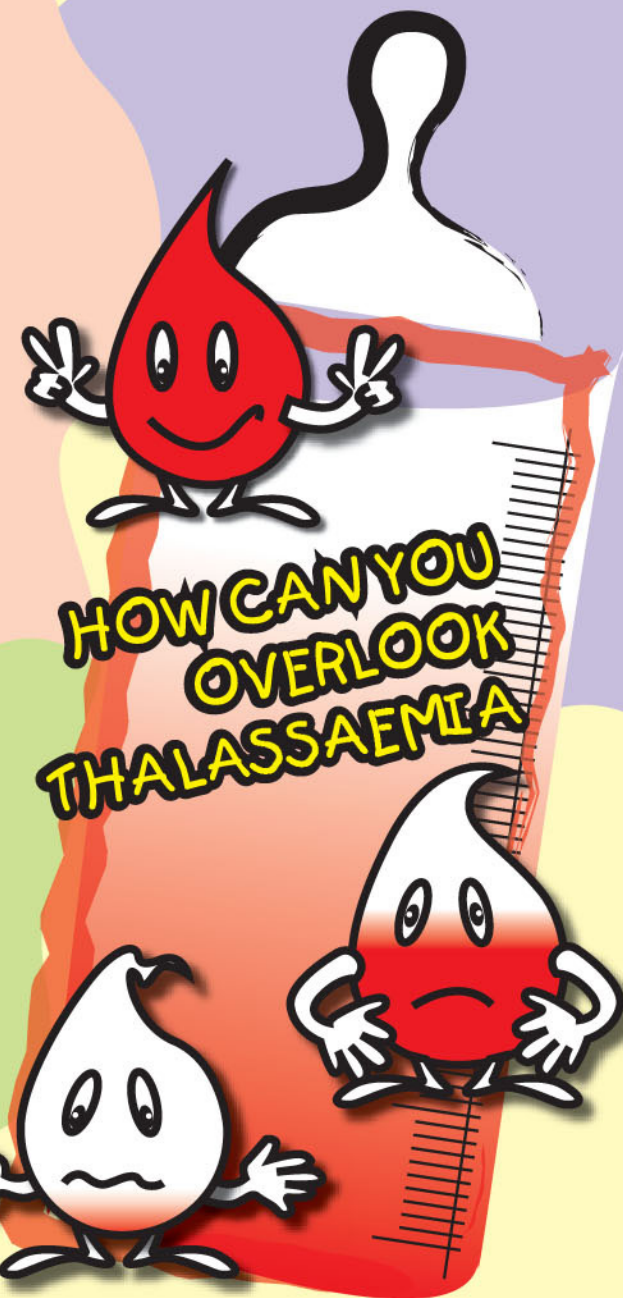
This is usually done between 16th-18th weeks of pregnancy. Under ultrasound guidance, the doctor removes a small sample of the amniotic fluid for DNA testing.

3. Foetal Blood Sampling

This can be carried out at 18th-20th weeks of pregnancy. A sample of the baby's blood is obtained and tested to determine whether or not the baby has Thalassaemia Major.

OTHER WAYS TO HELP TO PREVENT THALASSAEMIA

- Donate generously to support the public educational work provided by the Children's Thalassaemia Foundation.
- If you are a carrier, ask your family members and relatives to go for a blood test.
- Spread this message to your friends and relatives.



If you would like to know more about Thalassaemia, please contact:

Thalassaemia Education & Counseling Unit :
2986-3311

Children's Thalassaemia Foundation : 2523-5400

URL : www.thalassaemia.org.hk

The Thalassaemia Association of Hong Kong
2889-8399



