

step 1

Newborn Hearing Screening

**What every parent
Should Know**

What is Newborn Infant Hearing Screening?

A newborn hearing screening checks your baby's hearing shortly after birth. This screening process can help detect a possible hearing loss within the first months of a baby's life.

It is important that you find out about your baby's hearing. Hearing loss in babies is easy to overlook. Babies cannot answer you when you call them or ask you to repeat yourself! Babies start learning how to use sound as soon as they are born. Since children learn to speak by listening, babies who do not hear will have difficulty learning to talk and understand words.

The District of Columbia Newborn Screening Act requires that all infants born in the District are screened for hearing loss prior to discharge. The hospital must tell parents about the testing, any normal or abnormal results, and provide parents with advice for follow up and treatment. Parents may decide to not have their baby tested for religious or other reasons; however, every baby should be offered testing. If hearing loss is not discovered early, your baby could experience delays in speech, language, emotional, and educational development.



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How is the Newborn Hearing Screening done?

Newborn hearing screening involves two types of computerized tests: Otoacoustic Emissions (OAE) and Auditory Brainstem Response (ABR). Your baby may have one or both of these tests. In each test your baby will listen to a series of soft sounds through a tiny earphone. The computer will measure your baby's response to sound. Both methods are quick, safe and do not hurt.

What does it mean if my baby does not pass the hearing screening?

If your baby does not pass the initial hearing screening, it does not necessarily mean that your baby has a permanent hearing loss. **Not passing the first screening test means that your baby should have their hearing screening repeated.** This may be done before your baby leaves the hospital, or an appointment will be made for your baby to return to the hospital for a repeat hearing screening.



What if my baby is “referred” after the second hearing screening?

Babies that do not pass or are “referred” on the second screening will need to have a more detailed hearing test. The more detailed hearing test should be done by an Audiologist (health care professional with a specialty in hearing) to get a more complete picture of your child’s hearing. This testing should be done as soon as possible before your baby is three months of age.

What if the detailed test shows that my baby has a hearing loss?

An Audiologist along with a Pediatric Ear/Nose/Throat doctor can best describe the next steps. Treatment depends on the type and severity of the hearing loss. If the hearing loss is permanent, there are many means of support available to you and your baby.

For babies with hearing loss, it is important to establish a “medical home”. In a medical home, your baby’s doctor works as a partner and helps you connect with medical and other needed support.

Keep in Mind!

Even if your baby passed the hearing screening tests, your baby may still be at risk for developing a hearing loss. The following are known risk factors for hearing loss:

- Family history
- Jaundice (yellowing of the skin)
- Medicines given that may be toxic to the ear
- Low APGAR Scores (Two numbers given by a doctor to describe your baby’s condition at birth)
- Prematurity (babies born too early)
- Long term use of a breathing tube
- Cytomegalovirus (CMV) or Varicella (Chicken Pox) infection in mom

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Every baby needs lots of love and attention, and this is especially true for babies with hearing loss. It is important to communicate with your newborn in any way possible including your touch, your gestures, your facial expressions and your voice. Building bonds with your baby is important and necessary to their development.





Your baby's hearing is very important. After passing the Newborn Hearing Screening, continue to monitor your baby's hearing and speech development.

Newborn Hearing Screening

The following is a checklist parents can use to continue to check for possible problems in the future.

HEARING AND SPEECH AND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT GUIDE

Birth to Three Months

- Startles to loud noise
- Quiets or smile in response to sound
- Makes cooing sounds

Four to Six Months

- Moves eyes in direction of sounds
- Starts babbling (“baba,” “mama,” “gaga”)
- Uses many sounds and squeals

Seven to Nine Months

- Turns head towards sounds
- Understands “no-no” or “bye-bye”
- Begins to repeat sounds

Ten to 12 Months

- Uses one or two words (may not be clear)
- Points to favorite toy or object when asked
- Begins to respond to request “come here” and “want more”

13 to 18 Months

- Uses more words every month
- Follows simple directions (e.g. get the ball)
- Participates in simple stories, songs, and rhymes

18 to 24 Months

- Uses mostly words to communicate
- Begins to use some two word combinations, (e.g. “more cookie” or “go bye-bye”)
- Enjoys listening to stories

**FOR MORE INFORMATION AND ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS
REGARDING NEWBORN HEARING SCREENING CALL:**

1-800-MOM BABY

DC Hears is the state agency in the District of Columbia designated to promote early detection and intervention for all children from birth to five years of age who have been diagnosed with hearing loss regardless of family income.

This project is supported in part by the District of Columbia Department of Health Community Health Administration and The Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Health Resources and Services Administration, United States Department of Health and Human Services

The DC Newborn Screening Act protects your right to refuse these tests on your baby if you so desire. However, you are encouraged to consider the benefits of the screening before you refuse. If you do not wish your baby to be tested, simply tell the nurse or doctor.

APPOINTMENT INFORMATION

An appointment has been made for you baby’s repeat screening.

Location:_____

Phone number:_____

Date/Time:_____

**Finding a hearing loss early can make a big difference
in your baby’s life.**