



# Can My Baby Hear?



Information for  
Families About  
Newborn Hearing  
Screening

### Q&A



#### What is newborn hearing screening?


Newborn hearing screening shows which babies might have a hearing loss. Hearing loss is any condition that affects how a baby perceives sound. Ask your medical care provider about hearing screening for your baby.

#### When is hearing screening done?

Hearing screening is done while your baby is in the hospital. Some babies will require additional screening. This additional screening should be completed by 2 weeks of age.

#### Why is the screening done?

A hearing loss will delay a child's speech or language development. Language develops very quickly in the early years of life. It is the foundation for all learning. Services to minimize delays in development should begin before your baby is 6 months old.



#### How is the hearing screening done?


Screening is done with special hearing screening equipment. It is quick, easy, non-invasive and does not hurt. Many babies sleep through the screening. Hospitals use either OAE or ABR screening.

#### What is OAE Screening?

OtoAcoustic Emissions (OAE) screening uses tiny earphones placed in your baby's ear. It is done while the baby is sleeping or very quiet. The machine records the ear's response to sounds (called clicks or tone bursts).

#### What is ABR Screening?

Auditory Brainstem Response (ABR, BSER or BAER) uses three sensors placed on the baby's head. It is done while the baby is sleeping. The machine measures the brain's response to sound.



#### What might cause hearing loss at birth?

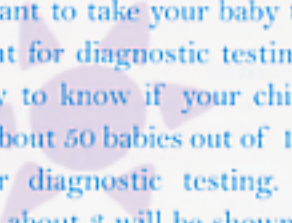
Hearing loss might be temporary due to fluid or blockage. Hearing loss might be permanent for a variety of reasons.

#### What does "referred" mean?

It means your baby needs to have diagnostic testing by an audiologist. This testing should be completed by the time your baby is 6 months old. Diagnostic testing is needed to determine if your baby has a hearing loss.

#### What happens when my baby is referred?

It is important to take your baby to his or her appointment for diagnostic testing. This is the only way to know if your child has a hearing loss. About 50 babies out of 1000 will be referred for diagnostic testing. Of the babies referred, about 3 will be shown to have a hearing loss.



#### When should children have hearing screening?

Hearing loss can occur at any time. Use the **Hearing & Related Speech/Language Guide** (on the back) every few months. If your child does not do the items listed, discuss them with your child's medical care provider. Hearing screening should be repeated as children grow.



Hearing testing should be done any time there is a concern about a child's hearing.



### Birth to 3 months

- Passed newborn hearing screening
- Quiets to familiar voices
- Is startled by loud sounds
- Stirs to noises while sleeping

### 3 to 6 months

- Turns towards voices or unfamiliar noises
- Locates speaker or sound accurately within a room
- Reacts to sound (like smiles, quiets or cries)

### 6-12 months

- Responds to name
- Reacts to noises without seeing the source (like door opening)
- Imitates sounds
- Babbles sounds like da, ba, and ma
- Enjoys playing with toys that make noise

### 12-24 months

- Develops words rapidly (about: 1-3 words by 12-14 months, 10-15 words by 18 months)
- Follows simple directions (like "go get your shoes") without you pointing
- Quiets and looks when sound is presented (like adult reading story)
- Begins to identify body parts (like eyes and nose)

### 2 years

- Attends and responds to verbal cues, when interested
- Combines words, adds words daily (says about 50 words)
- Can follow a two-part command
- Understands most conversations

### 3 years

- Understands without needing words repeated
- Understands difference between similar sounding words (like candle/camel; how/who; cat/car)
- Attends to listening activities like story time
- Is usually understood by strangers
- Responds to communication or sound equally well outside or inside and in quiet or noisy places

### 4 years-5 years

- Listens to music or other household sounds at comfortable volume level
- Understands most comments or requests without repetition

Frequent ear infections at any age can affect hearing and auditory development. If ear infections or middle ear problems last for more than 3 months even with medical treatment, a hearing test is recommended. If vocalizations decrease over time or suddenly stop, contact your child's doctor.

## Questions or concerns about newborn hearing screening?

- Contact your local hospital's newborn hearing screening program
- Talk to your child's medical care provider
- Use the Web site [www.listen-up.org](http://www.listen-up.org)

### For more information, contact:

The New Hampshire Department of  
Health & Human Services  
Office of Community & Public Health  
Bureau of Maternal & Child Health  
Universal Newborn Hearing  
Screening Program  
6 Hazen Drive, Concord, NH 03301

Phone: 1-800-852-3345, Ext. 1037 or  
603-271-1037

Relay New Hampshire TTY: 711

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This brochure was produced through the support of the Maternal and Child Health Bureau and HRSA, in collaboration with Early Connections, U.S. Department of Education grant H324T990015-00, at the Institute on Disability/University of New Hampshire

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

 **HRSA**  
Health Resources and Services Administration  
Maternal and Child Health Bureau

