

# Alabama's Listening!

**UNIVERSAL NEWBORN  
HEARING SCREENING**

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Alabama Department of Public Health  
Bureau of Family Health Services



## Why should my baby's hearing be screened?

Statistics show that between four to six newborns per 1000 have some degree of hearing loss. Although these statistics indicate that it is unlikely that your baby will have a hearing loss, if there is one, it is important that you know about it as soon as possible.

The first two years of your baby's life are critical for learning speech and language. Because a hearing loss could affect your baby's speech and language development, it is important to diagnose hearing problems early.



## How will my baby's screening test be done?

There are two types of hearing screening tests that may be used with your baby. Auditory Brainstem Response Testing (ABR) tests the infant's ability to hear soft sounds through miniature earphones. Electrodes measure your baby's brainwaves to determine if the sounds are heard normally. Otoacoustic emissions (OAE) are measured directly with a miniature microphone and sent to a special computer to determine your baby's hearing status. Both tests are very safe, take only minutes to perform, and are non-invasive. Most babies sleep through the hearing screening procedure.



## What if my baby does not pass the hearing screening?

If your baby does not pass the first screening test, an attempt will be made to repeat the screening before your baby goes home or you will be contacted to schedule a second test after going home. Although a small percentage of babies who do not pass the first screening actually do not have a hearing loss, it is important to find out for sure. If your baby does not pass the second screening, different types of hearing tests administered by the audiologist will be recommended.

Because early intervention is so important to the development of infants with hearing loss, it is important that the testing not be delayed. It is recommended that all testing be completed by 3 months of age and that infants with hearing loss be involved in an intervention program as early as possible, but not later than 6 months of age. Your audiologist and/or physician can provide you with information on intervention programs in your area.



## If my baby passes the hearing screening, do I need to retest later?

The results of the screening show how your baby is hearing at the time of the test. Some children with recurrent ear infections and other serious infections, chronic illness or family history of hearing loss may develop hearing loss later in life. If you have concerns about your child's hearing ability or speech and language development, you can have your child's hearing tested at any age.

In addition, a very small percentage of babies who do have hearing problems will pass the screening. The table on the next page describes normal development. If you have concerns about your baby's hearing, speech or language development, you should contact your baby's doctor or an audiologist.



# Developmental Milestones in Hearing

Use this as a guide to see how your child is growing and learning.

## **Birth to three months:**

- Jumps or blinks to loud sounds
- Wakes up to loud sounds
- Quiets when he or she hears mom's voice

## **Three months to six months:**

- Turns eyes or head to search for the sound source
- Responds to your voice even when you cannot be seen
- Enjoys toys that make sounds
- Starts babbling

## **At six months:**

- Responds to his or her name
- Turns head to the direction of the sound source
- Begins to imitate speech sounds

## **At ten to twelve months:**

- Understands and follows simple directions
- Gives a block or toy to you when asked for it without pointing
- Imitates speech sounds of others

## **At thirteen to eighteen months:**

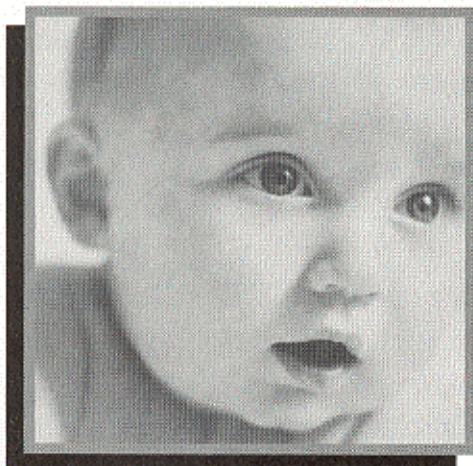
- Follows simple one step directions
- Uses 3-20 single words
- Points to 1-3 body parts when asked

## **At nineteen to twenty-four months:**

- Understands approximately 300 words
- Puts two words together ("eat cookie") by 24 months of age
- Points to five body parts
- Responds to "yes" or "no" questions



helping  
babies



develop  
language



for  
learning  
and



interaction

For more information,  
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