


universal newborn
hearing screening:
an important
beginning



early hearing
detection &
intervention

Florida Department of Health



The birth of a new baby is one of the most joyous times in a parent's life. It also can be a time filled with questions. One of these questions may be: "Is my baby's hearing okay, and how can I find out?" This is a question that can be answered quickly and effectively, usually before your baby leaves the hospital.

A newborn hearing screening is a safe and painless method to test whether or not your baby can hear well. It is important to find out early if your child has a hearing loss. Children who have trouble hearing and do not promptly receive extra care and assistance may have difficulty learning and communicating with others. The earlier a child is diagnosed as having hearing loss and receives appropriate services, the more likely he or she will develop learning and language skills similar to children who do not have a hearing loss.

speech, language & hearing guidelines

by the age of 2 months

Startles to loud sound

Quiets to familiar voices

Makes vowel sounds like "ohh," "ahh"

by the age of 4 months

Looks for sound with eyes

Begins to babble

Uses a variety of voice sounds—
squeals, whimpers, chuckles

by the age of 6 months

Turns head toward sounds

Begins to imitate speech sounds
Babbles ("ba-ba," "ma-ma," "ga-ga")

by the age of 9 months

Imitates speech sounds of others
Understands "no-no" or "bye-bye"
Turns head toward soft sounds

by the age of 12 months

Correctly uses "ma-ma" or "da-da"
Gives toy when asked for
Responds to singing or music
Locates sound on all levels

How many babies are born with a hearing loss?

Each year in the United States, as many as 3 to 5 babies out of each 1,000 born, are deaf or hard of hearing. It's important to screen all babies shortly after they're born because babies are not able to tell us if they can't hear. If a baby can't hear well, he or she may have trouble communicating and learning.

How will my baby's hearing be screened?

Before your baby goes home from the hospital, his or her hearing will be screened by a trained professional. There are two types of screening that can be used to check a baby's hearing. Your baby may have one or both of these screenings. The screening will show if your baby can hear, or if follow-up testing is needed. Your baby will not feel any pain during either of these screenings. The screening can be done while your baby is asleep. You will get the results of the hearing screening before your baby leaves the hospital.

If you are planning a home birth, be sure to speak with your midwife or your doctor to find the center closest to you that can screen your baby's hearing.

Why is it important to have my baby

If a hearing loss is found, you and your baby can get help early.

This help can include hearing aids for

What are two hearing screening methods?



OAE

One screening method is called **Otoacoustic Emissions (OAE)**. A tiny earplug is inserted into your baby's ear. The earplug sends soft sounds into the ear and a computer reads the "echoes" that come back from your baby's ear.

The other screening method is called the **Auditory Brainstem Response (ABR)**. Small headphones are placed over your baby's ears. The headphones send soft clicking sounds into your baby's ears. Sensors or electrodes placed on different parts of the head measure your baby's responses to the sounds.



ABR

What if my baby does not pass the hearing screening?

If your baby does not pass the first hearing screening, he or she will be screened again. There are many reasons why a baby may not pass the first screening. If there is fluid in the ear from the birthing process or if your baby is too awake, it may affect the screening results. However, if your baby does not pass the second screening, it is important to have follow-up testing done by a skilled audiologist who is trained to test infants and young children. For names of audiology centers closest to you that can test babies' hearing, contact your primary care physician (pediatrician or family doctor).

Where is the follow-up hearing test done?

Your hospital or family doctor will help you arrange for a diagnostic hearing test. He or she will refer you to an audiological center. It is important that:

The center has testing equipment that is made specifically for infants and young children.

The testing is done by an audiologist who specializes in infants and young children, and has experience fitting hearing aids on infants and young children.

The audiologist has experience with infants, the Infants & Toddlers Early Intervention Services Program, and programs for children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

The center has someone available who uses the same form of communication as you (e.g. Spanish, American Sign Language, etc.).

Should I plan for my baby to be awake or asleep for the diagnostic hearing test?

Testing is quicker and easier if your baby is sleeping comfortably. In fact, your baby can be tested while resting in an infant carrier or in your arms. It also is helpful to bring any items (such as a bottle or pacifier) to help calm your baby if necessary.

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

If your baby does not have normal hearing in one or both ears, it is important to find out as soon as possible. Some babies need hearing aids and can be fitted with a hearing aid as young

hearing screened?

your baby and early intervention to help both you and your baby.

as 4 weeks of age. Hearing aids, family support, and services to help your child learn to communicate are available through Florida Infants & Toddlers Early Intervention Program. If medically related procedures are required, private and public health programs may pay for those services. You can call for help and more information at 1-850-245-4200. The Florida Early Intervention Program web site is at www.cms-kids.com.

If my baby's hearing seems okay after screening and testing, do I need to have his/her hearing checked again?

Some newborn babies can hear well enough to pass the hearing screening test, but may develop a hearing loss later. If you are worried about how your baby hears or talks, call your baby's doctor right away and ask about getting a hearing test. Remember—if you are concerned, that is the best reason to have your baby's hearing tested again. Also remember to keep your baby away from loud noises or music which can cause permanent hearing loss.

What are some good ways for me to communicate with my baby?

You and your baby send information to each other about your feelings every day in many different ways. Here are some ideas to keep that communication going:

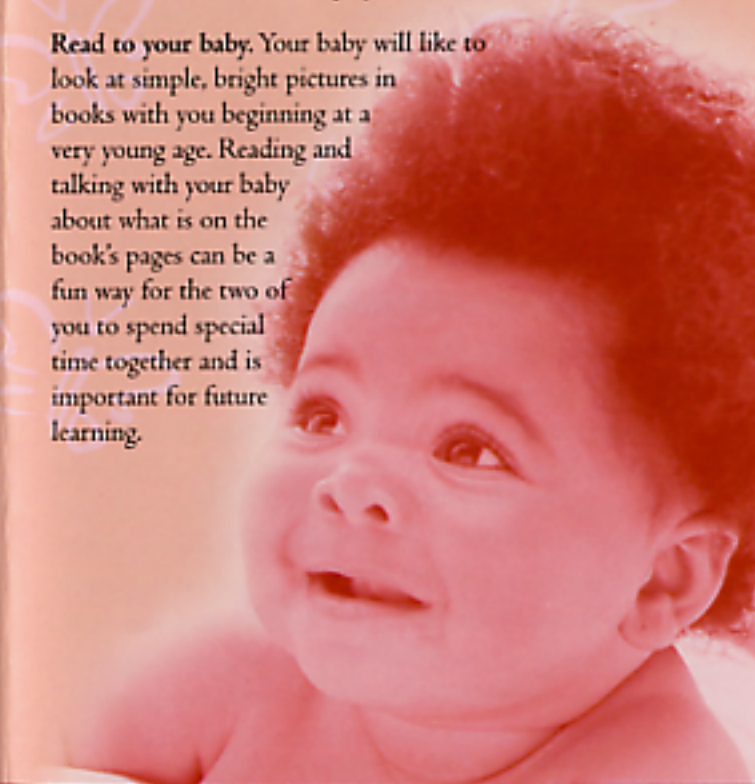
Respond to your baby. Your baby lets you know what he or she needs and feels by crying, cooing, wiggling and smiling. If you respond to these actions by holding, comforting, making eye contact, gently touching, cooing back, talking and smiling, your baby will learn that when he or she does something, you respond. This is the start of early communication between you and your baby and it is the basis for learning language.

Talk to your baby. It is good to talk to your baby during daily routines and activities, such as feeding, bathing, diapering and playing. Get close to your baby and look at him or her when you speak. Even though your baby may not know what you are saying, your voice and words will help teach the sounds of language. Get to know your baby's listening range and how close you need to be for him or her to hear you.

Use facial expressions with your baby. You communicate many different feelings to your baby with your facial expressions. From the look on your face, you can show your baby joy, surprise, pleasure or sadness.

Play with your baby. When you play games with your baby such as "so-o big," "peck-a-boo," or "patty-cake," you are teaching turn-taking while you both are having fun. Your baby may not understand all of your words, but he or she will understand the smiles and playfulness.

Read to your baby. Your baby will like to look at simple, bright pictures in books with you beginning at a very young age. Reading and talking with your baby about what is on the book's pages can be a fun way for the two of you to spend special time together and is important for future learning.



It's never too early to check your baby's hearing.



Florida Law 383.145 requires hearing screening of all newborns, preferably prior to hospital discharge but within the first 30 days of life.

The purpose of identifying newborns with hearing loss is to prevent or minimize the effects of hearing loss on language development, academic performance, and cognitive development through appropriate early intervention services.

The law further requires that Medicaid, HMOs, and health insurance companies cover initial hearing screening, follow-up, and medically necessary reevaluations leading to diagnosis of normal or impaired hearing. If medically related procedures are required, private health insurance companies and HMOs, as well as public programs such as Medicaid and the CMS Network, may pay for those services.

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