

# Universal Newborn Hearing Screening

Parent Information



**Missouri Department of  
Health and Senior Services**

*Division of Maternal,  
Child and Family Health*

*Bureau of Genetics and  
Disabilities Prevention*

## Why Should My Infant's Hearing Be Tested?

Statistics show that between four to six newborns per 1,000 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 the most important 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.

In 1999, Missouri passed House Bill 401, which mandates that all newborns have their hearing screened at birth. Hearing became a birth screening, similar to the other screenings, for all infants in January 2002.

## How Will The Screening Be Performed?

There are two types of tests used to screen a baby's hearing. Your baby may have one or both of these tests. In the first, Evoked Otoacoustic Emissions (OAE), your baby will hear a sound through a small ear plug.

A computer measures the echoes that return from the ear. The test is done when your baby is quiet and should be finished in a matter of minutes.

The second type of test is an Auditory Brainstem Response Test (AABR). In this method the baby hears a sound through small headphones and the screener measures your baby's response to the sound. Both of these tests are very safe and will not hurt your baby.

## What If My Baby Does Not Pass the Hearing Screening?

If your baby does not pass the first screening test, we will attempt 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 an 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 three

months of age and that infants with hearing loss be involved in an intervention program as early as possible, but no later than six months. Your audiologist 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 that time. 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.

# Your Child's Development

Use this as a guide to see how your child is growing and learning. Infants and children with concerns may be eligible for services.

## Two Months

- Startles to loud sounds/quiets to mom's voice
- Looks at own hands/looks at rattle
- Makes comfort sounds/sucks well from bottle
- Lifts head when on stomach
- Molds and relaxes body when held

## Four Months

- Looks with eyes for a sound
- Holds chest up while on stomach using forearms
- Plays with rattles, reaching and grasping
- Coos using vowels

## Six Months

- Turns head to look for a sound
- May start crawling, pivoting, rolling
- Bears weight on hands while on stomach
- Sits momentarily leaning on hands
- Transfers objects from one hand to the other
- Hand-eye coordination developing

## Nine to Twelve Months

- By nine months, responds to own name
- Imitates simple sounds (mama, dada)
- Puts objects in a container
- Stands alone briefly, walks with hands held
- Drinks from a cup (may need help)
- First dental check-up may be around this time
- Fixates intensely on facial features

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### **MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SENIOR SERVICES**

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Hearing impaired citizens may contact the department through Missouri Relay, 800-735-2466

### **AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY/ AFFIRMATIVE ACTION EMPLOYER**

Services provided on a  
nondiscriminatory basis.

For information regarding  
other Maternal and Child  
Health Services call:  
**1-800-TEL-LINK**  
(1-800-835-5465)