
Newborn Hearing Screening



What is it?

It is a test that can detect hearing loss at birth.

When is it done?

It is important to test your baby in the first three weeks of life. The test is best done when your baby is quietly sleeping.

How is it done?

This screening is not painful in any way to your baby. Tiny cups are placed around your baby's ears. Three tiny sensors are placed on your baby's head using a jelly-like substance. The machine makes a soft clicking sound. As your baby listens to the sounds through the ear cups, the sensors record and measure how your baby's brain responds to the clicks.

Why is it important?

Hearing loss is the most common birth disorder in newborns. About 1 out of every 300 babies are born with severe hearing loss and it is an invisible disorder. Without newborn hearing screening, the average age of detection of hearing loss is between 2 and 3 years of age. Hearing loss that goes untreated may lead to speech and language delays, as well as delays in school. However, delays may be lessened or avoided if a hearing loss is discovered early and the infant receives treatment.

What causes hearing loss in newborns?

There are many causes of hearing loss in newborns. Some may be temporary and easily corrected. For example, a blockage in the ear canal, or fluid in the middle ear may cause a hearing loss. Some hearing loss is permanent and may only be corrected by hearing aids or other listening devices. Some infections that mothers may have during pregnancy, such as Rubella, may cause an infant's hearing loss at birth. Hearing loss may also be passed on in families. Sometimes there is no known cause for hearing loss in newborns.

What does it mean if my baby does not pass this test?

It does not mean that your baby cannot hear. It only means that your baby needs to be screened again in a few days. If your baby does not pass the second screen he/she will need to see a hearing specialist (audiologist) for a complete test to find out for sure if there is a hearing loss, and if so what kind of a hearing loss it is. The audiologist will also evaluate exactly how loud different sounds need to be in order for the baby to hear them. Your baby should see the audiologist before four months of age.

Some babies do not have hearing loss at birth but may develop hearing loss later on in life. If a hearing loss is suspected at any time, please talk to your health care provider. (To determine if your child may not be hearing, see the back of this sheet for a speech and hearing checklist.)

SPEECH AND HEARING CHECKLIST

Babies who can hear at birth sometimes develop hearing loss later on due to illness, injury, or other causes. This checklist tells you what to expect as your baby grows.

0-4 MONTHS

Startles to or is awakened by loud sounds. Quiets to the sound of a familiar voice.

4-6 MONTHS

Turns toward or looks for a familiar or new sound. Likes rattles and toys that make sound. Seems to recognize mother's voice.

6-12 MONTHS

Turns or looks up when called by name. Imitates sounds and pitches. Understands the meaning of "no" and "bye bye." Uses voice to get attention. Begins to respond to requests.

12-18 MONTHS

Uses 4-5 words by 18 months. Points to at least one body part when asked. Understands one-step commands such as "sit down," or "close the door."

18-24 MONTHS

Uses 10-15 words by age 2. Likes music. Points to familiar objects when you name them. Puts two words together by age 2.

24-36 MONTHS

Uses 200 words by age 3. Listens to radio or television at same loudness as other people. Hears when called from another room. Uses two to three word sentences. Strangers understand most of your child's speech.

If your child cannot do these things at the ages listed, talk with your health care provider and ask to see an audiologist for hearing tests.

*****For additional information contact the Wisconsin Association for Perinatal Care at (608) 267-6060 or Elizabeth Wussow at (608) 267-9191.***
