

*When a newborn
does not pass the
hearing screening . . .*



What do I do now?



A Parent's Guide

What are the chances my baby has a permanent hearing loss?

About 3 in 10 babies who do not pass both their in-hospital and outpatient hearing screens have permanent hearing loss. Some babies will have hearing loss in both ears. Some will have hearing loss in just one ear. Some hearing loss is mild and some is severe. All of these babies need help to prevent delays in their language development.



What causes a hearing loss?

There are many causes of hearing loss at birth. Some hearing loss, such as that caused by ear infections, is temporary and can be easily corrected. Other hearing loss is permanent and may be more serious. Hearing loss in newborns can be caused by an infection the mother has during pregnancy (such as Rubella or Herpes) or by medical complications during the baby's first hours of life. Hearing loss may also be the result of family history.



How will my baby's hearing be tested?

Every complete hearing test for babies should include an ABR (Auditory Brainstem Response). This test measures how well the baby's ears and nerves respond to sounds.

An ABR is done while your baby is sleeping. A special sticker is placed on the forehead, and sounds are played into each ear through a small microphone. The responses of your baby's ears and nerves are detected and recorded in a computer. The audiologist will find the softest sound to which your baby responds.



What is an audiologist?

An audiologist is a professional trained in the field of hearing. The audiologist tests hearing and decides if a person has a hearing loss. An audiologist can also tell how severe a hearing loss is, what type of loss a person has, and what can be done. If your baby has a hearing loss, the audiologist can help you decide what to do next.

What do I do now?

Tell your doctor that your baby needs a complete hearing test. For infants under 6 months of age, the test should include an ABR.

An audiologist will do the testing. A list of audiologists who have experience with babies is attached. Your doctor may suggest an audiologist, or you can choose one from the list.

Set up the appointment for testing as soon as possible. Do not delay more than 1 month because of ear infections. A special ABR can be done if your baby has an ear infection.

Most health insurance, Medicaid, and CHIP plans help pay for the hearing test.



Why test my baby's hearing now?

It has been shown that when a baby with hearing loss is identified before 3 months of age and begins receiving special services before 6 months of age, that normal language, social, and educational development can be achieved. The earlier a hearing loss is detected, the better the chance of developing normal language skills. Unfortunately, because hearing loss is invisible, it is easily missed in the early months of life.

Communicating with your baby is a joyful experience. Whether or not your baby has a hearing loss, every baby needs lots of love and attention. Newborns need to be held, to have you look directly into their eyes, and to speak to them in soothing tones. Even babies who can't hear you respond to your touch and your eyes. Communicating using your voice, touch, and facial expression are important ways of interacting with your newborn.



Where can I get help?

In Utah, every family with a child who has a hearing loss can receive public services without charge. This special program for children from birth through 3 years and their families is called the Parent Infant Program (PIP) and is offered by the Utah School for the Deaf. It is part of the public program for children with special needs called "Baby Watch/Early Intervention." PIP is available in every county in the state. Information describing PIP and Baby Watch services is included with this brochure.



Other services may also be available in your community. Hospital clinics, university clinics, and private speech therapists can provide services for infants and children with hearing loss. There may be a cost for these programs. Some families choose to use a combination of public and private services that best suits their needs.

If you have questions about your baby's hearing test, please contact . . .

- An audiologist listed in the enclosed brochure.
- The nursery in the hospital where your baby was born.
- Utah Department of Health
Hearing, Speech, & Vision Services:
801.584.8215 • 800.829.8200
- Your baby's doctor.

