

The Simple Tests That May Save Your Baby's Life



Wisconsin Newborn Screening Program

This booklet explains three very important tests—blood, hearing and heart screening—that can protect the health and well-being of your baby.

Before your baby is born, talk to your doctor or midwife about getting these important tests for your baby.

What is Newborn Screening?

Newborn screening is three tests that the law requires hospitals, doctors, and midwives in Wisconsin to do, to protect the health and well-being of babies. Newborn screening can find diseases and conditions that cause many serious problems including brain damage, learning problems, lifelong disabilities, and death.

Newborn screening can protect your baby's health and potentially save his or her life.

Blood Screening uses a small sample of the baby's blood to test for 44 disorders. It is recommended that this test be done when the baby is 24 to 48 hours old.

Hearing Screening tests to see if a baby is hearing sounds at the level we talk. This test needs to be done when the baby is sleeping and is best done in the first two weeks of life.

Heart (CCHD) Screening tests the level of oxygen in the baby's blood to look for signs of a heart defect. This test is best done when the baby is 24 to 48 hours old.



Why is Newborn Screening important?

Newborn Blood Screening Screening finds health problems early. About 1 in every 800 English babies is born with a hidden disorder than can be found by a screening blood test. Some of these disorders are more common in Amish, Mennonite, and other plain communities. Some babies will benefit from treatment right away, even if they first appear healthy. Finding the illness early and treating babies before they show signs of sickness can help prevent serious permanent problems or even death. Babies can have these problems even if their older brothers and sisters are healthy.

Newborn Hearing Screening is important because finding and treating hearing loss or deafness when a baby is young helps to prevent delays in speaking and learning. When a family does not know that a child can't hear, they may think that the child has behavioral or learning problems.

Newborn Heart (CCHD) Screening can detect certain types of heart problems in a baby, often before the baby becomes ill.

Are these tests required? Parents can refuse these tests based on religious or personal conviction. Not screening your baby is a serious decision. Some of these conditions can affect your baby's blood, breathing, eating, growth and development, or in some cases cause them to die, if they are not found within a few days of birth.



How Is Your Baby Screened?

Newborn Blood Screening is done by collecting a small blood sample from your baby's heel on a special card that is sent to the Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene for testing. Make sure to tell the person who collects your baby's blood to put the name of your care provider on the blood card. This will help coordinate care and make sure you can get the results of the test at your next visit.

Newborn Hearing Screening is done by using a small machine to test how the baby responds to sounds. The test is painless and takes only a few minutes to do if the baby is sleeping soundly. You can learn the results right away from the person who is doing the test.

Newborn Heart (CCHD) Screening is done by wrapping a small probe around both the baby's right hand and either foot to check the baby's oxygen level. The test is done when the baby is quiet and alert. It is painless and takes only a few minutes. The person who is doing the test can tell you the results as soon as the test is done.



What Will Happen Next?

Some babies will need to have one or more of the tests repeated or have further tests to confirm the results. If your baby does not pass the blood, hearing, or heart (CCHD) test your provider will help you with the next steps. Often this can wait a few days, but babies who do not pass the heart test or are found to have a very serious condition on the blood test may need further testing or treatment at a hospital right away.

Newborn Blood Screening. If your baby has one of the disorders found through Newborn Blood Screening, there is help. Treatment may include giving your baby medicines or changing what your baby eats or drinks. Your child may need continuous medical care from special doctors to have a healthy and long life.

Newborn Hearing Screening If your baby has a hearing loss, there is help. A special doctor can help you figure out the best plan for helping your baby. Treatment may include hearing aids to make speech louder and teaching your family sign language.

Newborn Heart (CCHD) Screening. If your baby has Critical Congenital Heart Disease (CCHD), there is help. Doctors can use surgery and medications to help babies with heart defects. Often, babies who are treated for heart defects go on to lead healthy lives.



For general information on newborn screening contact:

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State of Wisconsin
Department of Health Services
Division of Public Health
P-00446 (09/2015)