

Newborn Hearing Screenings

All newborns should be screened for hearing loss.

Make sure your newborn's hearing is screened before leaving the hospital.

Why Screen Newborns?

Newborn hearing screenings are extremely important. When newborns have hearing loss and are diagnosed early, effective intervention is available to help them achieve normal or nearly normal speech, language, and hearing milestones.

- Approximately 3-6 of every 1,000 newborns have significant hearing problems.
- More than 95 percent of newborns who are born deaf have parents with normal hearing.
- Hearing loss is invisible; it cannot be seen by examining your newborn's ears.
- Most newborns with hearing loss have no signs or symptoms.

Speech Language and Hearing Skills

An infant with normal hearing should be able to do the following:

Around **two months** of age

- Startles to loud sound
- Quiets to familiar voices
- Makes vowel sounds such as "ohh"

Around **four months** of age

- Looks for sound sources
- Starts babbling
- Makes squeals and chuckles

Around **six months** of age

- Turns head toward loud sounds
- Begins to imitate speech sound
- Babbles sounds such as "ba-ba"

Around **nine months** of age

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

Around **12 months** of age

- Correctly uses "ma-ma" or "da-da"
- Gives toy when asked
- Responds to singing or music

What Should I Know About the Hearing Screening?

- Hearing screenings are fast, safe, and painless.
- Sometimes newborns are screened once or twice.
- Hearing screenings take about 10 minutes.
- Most babies sleep through the hearing screening.
- You will receive the hearing screening results before you leave the hospital.

What If My Newborn Does Not Pass the Hearing Screening?

Some newborns who need a follow-up hearing screening or a hearing test have normal hearing—BUT some have hearing loss.

If your newborn does not pass the screening, it is important to make an appointment with an audiologist for a complete hearing test.

What If My Newborn Passes the Hearing Screening?

Newborns who pass the screenings are usually fine. However, some newborns might hear well enough to pass a screening, even though their hearing is not perfectly normal. Some newborns may pass the screening, yet they can lose hearing from illness, medications, or genetic reasons—after leaving the hospital. Therefore, even if your newborn passes the screening, tell your audiologist or physician if you suspect hearing loss at any time.

Other Warning Signs of Hearing Loss

Your newborn might be at risk for delayed onset hearing loss if any of the following applies to your baby.

- You or another caregiver has concerns.
- Family history of childhood hearing loss.
- Neonatal intensive care stay with ECMO therapy.
- Chemotherapy.
- Some infections that occur before and after birth (including CMV, bacterial, and viral meningitis).
- Some disorders that affect the baby's nervous system.

Information was obtained from the American Academy of Audiology website at www.audiology.org.