

Newborn Screening

For Prenatal Providers

Facts for Healthcare Providers



Blood Spot Screening

- A few drops of blood are collected from a newborn's heel between 24-48 hours of age. The blood spots are screened for over 50 rare but treatable disorders such as congenital hypothyroidism, cystic fibrosis, sickle cell disease, and phenylketonuria (PKU).
- The Department of Health tests the blood spots using multiple methods. Visit the Newborn Screening Program website for details.
- Newborns affected with these disorders look healthy at birth. Without screening, the disorder may remain unnoticeable while causing permanent damage to the infant. Identifying and treating affected infants right away can prevent significant health problems and even death.



Hearing Screening

- Hearing is ideally screened when a newborn is at least 12 hours old.
- There are two methods used to screen hearing: otoacoustic emissions (OAE) and automated auditory brainstem response (AABR).
- Hearing loss in infants is usually not noticeable to parents or providers because they still startle to loud sounds. Learning that infants have hearing loss before three months of age will help them stay on track with speech, language, and communication skills.



Pulse Oximetry Screening

- Screening for critical congenital heart disease (CCHD) happens when a newborn is at least 24 hours old.
- A simple test using sensors on the baby's skin measures oxygen levels in the blood. Low oxygen levels can be a sign of CCHD or other health issues.
- Not all heart defects can be found by prenatal ultrasounds. Without screening after birth, infants with CCHD may be sent home because they appear healthy. At home, these infants can develop serious health problems and often require emergency care. If detected early, however, they can be treated and lead healthier lives.

What will my baby be screened for?

Your baby will be checked for more than 50 health problems, including hearing loss and heart defects. You can learn about these health problems on the Newborn Screening Program website.

Where will screening take place?

Screening happens at the birth hospital or out-of-hospital birth site, unless you choose not to have your baby screened.

Will screening hurt my baby?

Your baby will not experience discomfort during the hearing or pulse oximetry screens. Since the blood spot screen involves a heel prick, your baby may feel some brief discomfort.

How long does it take to get results?

You can get your baby's hearing and pulse oximetry screening results on the day of screening. Blood spot screening takes a few days.

How do I get the results?

You can ask your birth provider or person performing the screen for hearing and pulse oximetry screening results. Ask your baby's healthcare provider for blood spot screening results at your baby's first well-child check.

What happens if screening finds a problem?

Screening can only tell us if your baby *might* have a health problem. We won't know for sure until your baby's healthcare provider does more tests.

If the blood spot screen is abnormal, the Department of Health will notify your baby's healthcare provider as soon as possible. Your baby's healthcare provider will contact you to discuss the next steps.

Visit our website for more information
and to learn about parent options:

www.health.state.mn.us/newbornscreening

