

What to Expect from Your Baby's First Test (2:21)

BABY'S FIRST TEST

Female Narrator: Moms and dads want to do everything they can to help their little ones grow healthy and happily. Newborn screening is a public health program used to find serious but treatable conditions that may affect your baby early in life. Parents do not have to request this screening. It's standard protocol at hospitals and will be conducted unless requested otherwise.

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To conduct the screen, a nurse or midwife will first complete a newborn screening card where a blood sample will be collected. This usually happens 24 hours after your baby is born. The blood taken is part of the screening in what is known as the heel stick. Once the heel stick is complete, the nurse will mail the small sample of blood to a state laboratory for analysis. If more testing needs to be done, your doctor will alert you.

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After the heel stick, your baby's nurse will conduct either one of two hearing tests. These tests are so simple and gentle, your baby will be asleep through them. The otoacoustic emissions test determines if certain parts of your baby's ear reacts to sound. Sensors are placed on the baby's head. A tiny earphone and microphone are placed in the ear, and sounds are played. When a baby has normal hearing, an echo is reproduced back into the ear canal, which can be measured by the microphone. If no echo is found, it can indicate hearing loss. The other type of hearing test is known as the auditory brainstem response. This is used to see how your baby's brain responds to sound. Either test will let you know if your baby has hearing loss.

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The final part of your baby's newborn screening will be the pulse oximetry, or pulse ox, a test used to find heart problems. Infants with heart problems may have low blood oxygen levels, and therefore the pulse ox test can help identify some heart problem called critical congenital heart disease.

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As you prepare for the arrival of your new baby, be sure to talk with your healthcare provider about newborn screening, and remember to ask for the results at your well baby visit. To learn more about newborn screening, please visit [Baby's First Test](#).