

the baby

newborn screening tests

Before leaving the hospital, babies will have some health checks, called newborn screening tests. Newborn screening looks for hidden health problems in babies. Some have a problem that cannot be seen. Some health conditions can affect the baby's ability to grow, communicate, and learn. In the United States, all hospitals are required by law to screen babies for a variety of health disorders. With early screening and diagnosis, babies can get earlier treatment.



What is the newborn screening looking for?

The newborn health screen tests for about 37 health conditions (this can vary by state). These include the following:

- Heart problems
- Disorders that affect how the body uses energy
- Blood disorders
- Hormonal disorders
- Hearing loss
- Other genetic disorders

There are three parts to newborn screening

Blood

Your baby's blood will be tested for a variety of health disorders. Your baby's heel will be pricked and a few drops of blood are placed onto a card for lab testing. The results are available within a few days. This test is usually repeated in two weeks by your baby's pediatric provider.

Hearing

This test checks for hearing loss. This is a painless test that is usually done while your baby is asleep. A small microphone and earphone are placed in the baby's ears. A sound is played and the echo from the baby's ear is recorded. If your baby has hearing loss, there will be no echo or a reduced echo. The results are immediate.

Heart

This test looks for hidden heart problems and takes place a day after birth and before you leave the hospital. This test involves placing a sensor on your baby's right hand and right foot for five minutes. The sensors will measure the baby's oxygen levels and heart rate. This test is painless. A nurse will review the results and let you know the results before you go home.

Frequently asked questions

What if newborn screening results aren't normal?

Most newborn screening results are normal. If your baby's screening results aren't normal, it does not mean that your baby has the condition that was being tested for. It does mean that further testing is needed to see if there is a health problem. Your healthcare provider will explain these tests as they come.

Why do we screen babies so soon after birth?

It is best for newborns with special conditions to receive help as soon as possible. With early detection, your baby and family can get the support you all need. Early detection can also help prevent complications.

Sources: <https://quilted.link/newbornscreen-wa>
<https://quilted.link/babysfirsttest>