

Newborn Hearing Screening in North Carolina

Did you know that every day, 33 babies (or 12,000 each year) are born in the U.S. with permanent hearing loss? Hearing loss is the most frequently occurring congenital condition, and can also be acquired during childhood.

Left undetected, hearing loss in infants can negatively impact speech and language acquisition, academic achievement, and social and emotional development. If detected, however, these negative impacts can be diminished and even eliminated through early intervention.

Screening newborns for hearing loss has become the standard of care for all hospitals in the United States, as technology has improved in recent years. All 88 birthing facilities in our state screen infants prior to the child going home. Screening methods are painless and easy, especially if a baby is sleeping.

For most babies, the initial screen in the hospital is the end of the process. However, some babies may need further follow-up. If so, the parents are asked to bring the baby back to the hospital or to a doctor's office for further testing.

Some babies will need to proceed on to a diagnostic evaluation. If this is done before a baby is three months old, generally the child will sleep through the process. The older a child is at the evaluation, the more likely he/she will need to be sedated for the procedure.

Even when a child passes the newborn hearing screening, it is important for parents to be aware of normal speech and hearing development. Progressive and late-onset hearing losses need to be identified as soon as possible.

NC's Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) Program

We care about your baby's hearing. The EHDI Program provides assistance and education to hospitals, medical providers, and others. It supports families by connecting them to available resources and helping them get the care their baby needs. Goals for the EHDI Program are to complete screening by **one** month, have a diagnosis by **three** months and if needed to begin intervention by **six** months. When these goals are met, children with hearing loss have positive speech, language, and listening outcomes regardless of communication modality.

To learn more about the EHDI Program and the services offered, please contact Kathleen Watts, Program Manager at:

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