

Thinking Ahead

There's so much to think about while you're pregnant. As you plan, take a minute to look ahead. At the hospital, your new baby will be tested – screened – for a variety of factors that may affect his or her health and development. You will not have to pay for any of these screenings. All conditions identified through these screenings can be treated if found early. We want your baby to get the best start possible, and these screenings are the first step.



Family Health Information Line

If you need more information about any of the newborn screening services or programs described in this guide, call the Family Health Information Line, toll-free, at 1-800-942-7434, weekdays from 8:30am to 4:30pm. Our team speaks English and Spanish.

MAKE HEALTH PART OF YOUR FAMILY
RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Newborn Screening and Services

What you need to know
before you have your baby.





Newborn Blood Screening

Before you and your baby go home from the hospital, a few drops of blood will be taken from your baby's heel. This blood is used to screen for several serious conditions (see the insert for a list of the conditions for which babies are tested). The results will be reported to your baby's doctor, who will share them with you. Newborn blood screening is required by law. Blood samples are stored until your baby reaches adulthood. To refuse, you must sign a waiver stating that you understand the risk of not having the test done.

Screening for other conditions not on the list is available for a fee through other labs. If you would like more information about additional testing, call the Family Health Information Line at 1-800-942-7434, weekdays from 8:30am to 4:30pm.

Newborn Hearing Screening

Babies learn from the time they are born, and one of the ways they learn is through hearing. Newborn hearing screening can detect possible hearing loss in the first days of your baby's life. During your baby's stay in the nursery, a small microphone is put in your baby's ear to measure how the ear responds to soft sounds. The test takes 10 to 15 minutes and is not painful. If the results are unclear, the test may need to be repeated. The Rhode Island Hearing Assessment Program will contact you if more tests are needed.



Family Outreach Program

Like you, we want your baby to get off to a good start. While you and your baby are in the hospital, a nurse will review your pregnancy and delivery records. They will look to see if there are any reasons your baby's development could be delayed. Based on this review, the nurse may refer you to the Family Outreach Program, a home visiting program for families with newborns and young children at no cost to the family.

Family Outreach offers information and help with many of the challenges of bringing baby home, from breastfeeding support to making your home safe for your baby.

The program offers information on how to care for your baby, including topics such as breastfeeding and nutrition, when to call your baby's doctor, and how to make your home safe for your baby. Home visitors provide support and link you to resources and services in your community. While you are in the hospital, a nurse from the Family Outreach Program may stop in to tell you more about it, or someone may call you after you leave the hospital to schedule a home visit.

KIDSNET

KIDSNET is the Rhode Island information system that helps families and doctors make sure that children receive complete preventive health care. All babies born in Rhode Island have health information included in KIDSNET. As your baby grows, your doctor and others will add your child's immunizations and information from the following health screenings: developmental assessment, newborn hearing, newborn blood screening, and lead screening. Information from your baby's birth certificate and from the Family Outreach, Early Intervention, and WIC Programs is also included.

KIDSNET is used to remind families and doctors when immunizations, lead screenings, and other services are needed. If your child has been to different doctors, KIDSNET will keep track of all of his or her immunizations in one place. KIDSNET also helps to see whether all Rhode Island children are getting the care they need.

KIDSNET information is confidential and is protected under State and Federal privacy laws. Only the Health Department, doctors, nurses, and other approved professionals such as school nurses or the Head Start Program can see KIDSNET information. You have the right to restrict who can see your child's information. For more details, call KIDSNET at 401-222-4220, weekdays from 8:30am to 4:00pm.

