



Newborn Hearing Screening

What You Should Know

1-800-MOM BABY
(1-800-666-2229)

DC | HEALTH
GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Newborn Hearing Screening

What You Should Know

What is a newborn hearing screening?

A newborn hearing screening checks if your baby is deaf or hard of hearing. It is one of three screens that should take place after birth, along with blood and heart screens.

It is important to find out about your baby's hearing. Babies use all their senses, including sound to learn about their world right away! Babies brains need to hear or see language (whether spoken or signed) to learn and use it. If your baby does not hear well, you and your family can get help to make sure they learn to communicate.

The District's comprehensive newborn screening provisions within the Better Access for Babies to Integrated Equitable Services Act of 2020 (DC BABIES Bill) require that all infants born in the district have their hearing screened before leaving the hospital. The hospital should share with families what the testing is, results and what they mean, and information on what families should do next. Families may decide not to have their baby tested for religious or other reasons; however, every baby should be offered testing.



Image Courtesy of Natus Medical Incorporated

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How is the newborn hearing screening done?

Newborn hearing screening involves two types of computerized tests: Otoacoustic Emissions (OAE) and Auditory Brainstem Response (ABR). Your baby may have either or both of these tests. In each test, your baby will listen to a series of soft sounds through a tiny earphone. The computer will measure your baby's response to sound. Both methods are quick and safe, and they do not hurt. Most babies sleep through their newborn hearing screening.

What does it mean if my baby does not pass the first hearing screening?

Your baby needs to be screened again. Your baby's doctor should make a referral to receive this repeat hearing screening. A follow up screening is best completed as soon as possible and before one month of age.



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What if my baby does not pass the second hearing screening?

Your baby should be referred for a full hearing test by an audiologist. An audiologist is a doctor who specializes in hearing. The hearing test should be scheduled before your baby is three months old. This test will give you more information about your baby's hearing.

What if the detailed test shows that my baby is deaf or hard of hearing?

An audiologist and a pediatric ear/nose/throat doctor can best describe the next steps. Treatment depends on the type and severity of the hearing levels. There are resources available to support your family and make sure your baby has access to language.

For babies who are deaf or hard of hearing, it is important to establish a "medical home" (where your baby's doctor is located). In a medical home, your baby's doctor works as a partner and helps you connect with medical and other needed support.

If my baby passes the hearing screening, do I need to have their hearing checked again?

Yes. Some children have changes in their hearing as they grow. Hearing can change in either ear at any time. The following are known risk factors for hearing loss¹:

- Neonatal intensive care (NICU) stay of more than five days
- Craniofacial malformations
- Family history
- Certain genetic syndromes
- Certain illnesses or viruses during pregnancy, including congenital cytomegalovirus (cCMV)
- Certain medications
- Frequent ear infections
- Caregiver concerns

If you have concerns about your child's hearing, contact your baby's doctor.

¹JCIH (2019). Year 2019 Position Statement: Principles and Guidelines for Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Programs. *Journal of Early Hearing Detection and Intervention*, 4(2), 1-44. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15142/jepk-b748>
Retrieved from <https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/jehdi/vol4/iss2/1>

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Every baby needs lots of love and attention. It is important to communicate with your newborn in any way possible including your touch, your gestures, your facial expressions, and your voice. Building bonds with your baby is important and necessary to their development.



Your baby's hearing is important. If your baby passes the Newborn Hearing Screening, continue to monitor your baby's speech and language development.

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The following are age-related guidelines that may help identify if your child has speech and language concerns.

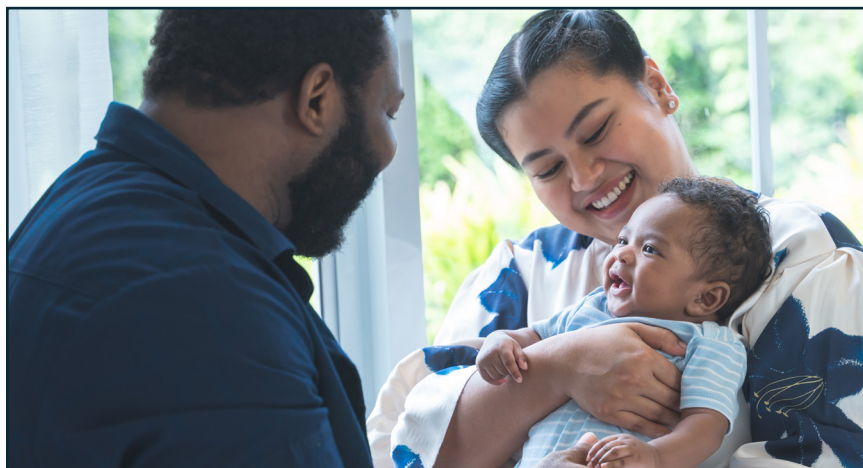
SPEECH AND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT GUIDE²

Birth to 3 Months

- Alerts to sound
- Quiets or smiles when you talk
- Makes sounds back and forth with you
- Makes sounds that differ depending on whether they are happy or upset
- Coos, makes sounds like oooooo, aahh, and mmmmmm

4 to 6 Months

- Giggles and laughs
- Responds to facial expressions
- Looks at objects of interest and follows objects with their eyes
- Reacts to toys that make sounds, like those with bells or music
- Vocalizes during play or with objects in mouth
- Vocalizes different vowel sounds – sometimes combined with a consonant, like uuuuummmm, aaaaaagoo or daaaaaaaaa
- Blows “raspberries”



²ASHA (2024). *Communication milestones: Birth to 1 year*. Retrieved May 30, 2024, from <https://www.asha.org/public/developmental-milestones/communication-milestones-birth-to-1-year/>

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7 to 9 Months

- Looks at you when you call their name
- Stops for a moment when you say, “no”
- Babbles long strings of sounds like mamamama, dadadada, or babababa
- Looks for loved ones when upset
- Raises arms to be picked up
- Recognizes the names of some people and objects
- Pushes away unwanted objects

10 to 12 Months

- By age 10 months, reaches for objects
- Points, waves, and shows or gives objects
- Imitates and initiates gestures for engaging in social interactions and playing games, like blowing kisses or playing peek-a-boo
- Tries to copy sounds that you make
- Enjoys dancing
- Responds to simple words and phrases like “go bye-bye” and “look at mommy”
- Says one or two words – like mama, dada, hi, and bye



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**FOR MORE INFORMATION AND ANSWERS TO
QUESTIONS REGARDING NEWBORN HEARING
SCREENING CALL:**

1-800-MOM BABY (1-800-666 2229)

DC Health houses the Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Program which is designed to ensure that children who are deaf or hard of hearing are identified and referred for treatment early.

The District's comprehensive newborn screening provisions within the BABIES Bill protect your right to refuse these tests on your baby if you so desire. If you do not wish your baby to be tested, simply tell the nurse or doctor. However, you are encouraged to consider the benefits of the screening before you refuse.

Appointment Information

An appointment has been made for you baby's repeat screening.

Location: _____

Phone Number: _____

Date/Time: _____

Knowing about your baby's hearing early can make a big difference in your baby's life.