

Baby's First Tests



Newborn Screenings

While most babies are born healthy, some infants are born with serious but treatable medical conditions. These conditions can be present in any family, even those without a family history.

Newborn screening helps health professionals identify and treat these conditions before making a baby sick.

These screenings are done before your baby leaves the hospital according to each state's requirements—most states screen for 29 of the 35 conditions recommended by the Secretary of Health and Human Services.

Over 12,000 babies with serious but treatable conditions grow up healthy thanks to newborn screenings.

Three parts to newborn screenings

Heel Stick

A small blood sample is taken from your baby's heel and placed on a newborn screening card. This card is mailed to a state laboratory for analysis. If an out-of-range result is detected, your baby's health provider will be notified immediately.

Hearing Test

An auditory brainstem response screening (ABR) checks to see if the nerve and brainstem pathways for hearing are working. Soft sounds are played to the baby's ear, and small sensors measure your baby's response. This test can be done while your baby is asleep.

Pulse Oximetry

Pulse oximetry is a test that measures the amount of oxygen in your baby's blood and can detect some heart problems called critical congenital heart disease (CCHD.)

Adapted from babysfirsttest.org