

# Newborn Hearing Screening

*No baby is too young for a hearing test*

## Why is my baby's hearing tested?

Your child will learn to talk by hearing voices and sounds. Your baby is not likely to have a hearing loss. But, if there is hearing loss, it is important to know about it as soon as possible. Three newborns out of 1,000 are born with lifelong hearing loss.

The first 2 years of a child's life are the most important time for learning speech and language. A hearing loss can prevent your baby from learning how to speak.



*It is important to know about hearing loss as soon as possible after a baby is born.*

## 6 to 9 Months

- Looks for family members when their names are spoken
- Turns head toward sounds
- Responds to own name
- Responds to simple requests with gestures
- Begins babbling, such as “baba” and “mamama”
- Uses voice to get your attention

## 9 to 12 Months

- Understands “no” and “bye bye”
- Responds to soft sounds
- Looks at pictures you describe
- Repeats simple sounds that you make
- Uses voice when playing alone

### Questions?

To learn more about newborn hearing screening, contact your baby's regular doctor.

Or contact:

Audiology Division  
University of  
Washington Medical  
Center:  
206-598-4022 (Voice)  
206-598-7538 (TTY)  
206-598-6611 (Fax)

Before your new baby leaves the hospital, we will do a hearing screening. The screening helps find babies who need more hearing testing. It can identify a mild or more severe hearing loss.

## How does the test work?

We use 2 types of tests. Your baby will have 1 or both of these tests. Both tests are very safe and will not hurt your baby.

### Evoked Otoacoustic Emissions

One test is called *evoked otoacoustic emissions* (EOAE). For this test, a soft rubber ear piece is placed in your baby's outer ear. It makes a soft clicking sound. Healthy ears will "echo" the click sound back to the ear piece.

### Brainstem Auditory Evoked Response

The 2nd type of test is called a *brainstem auditory evoked response* (BAER). For this test, special stickers are placed on your baby's skin. A soft rubber earphone sends a series of quiet sounds into your sleeping baby's ear. The stickers measure how your baby's hearing nerve responds. These responses are recorded and stored in a computer.

## What if my baby is referred for a 2nd screening test?

Many babies need a 2nd screening test. This does not mean your baby has a hearing loss. The most common reasons a baby needs more testing are:

- Fluid in the middle ear or an ear infection
- Ear canal is blocked with debris from the birth process
- To check for a permanent hearing loss

## What if my baby passes the hearing screening?

Your baby has normal hearing if he or she passed the screening. But, a child's hearing does not always stay normal over time.

Children may develop a hearing loss later if they have:

- Lots of ear infections
- Serious infection or chronic illness
- Family history of hearing loss

If you have any concerns about your baby's hearing, tell your baby's doctor as soon as possible. The doctor will provide medical help and make referrals for more testing.

## Signs that Your Baby Can Hear Well

### Birth to 3 Months

- Startles to sudden loud noises
- Stirs, wakes up, or cries to loud sounds
- Soothes or calms to your voice
- Makes cooing sounds

### 3 to 6 Months

- Begins to turn eyes or head toward sounds
- Stops crying when spoken to
- Awakens easily to sounds
- Begins making vowel sounds such as "ah" and "ou"