

CAN YOUR BABY HEAR?

Why we screen babies for hearing loss

Two out of 1,000 babies have hearing loss at birth. Two more develop hearing loss by the age of five. These children may hear some sounds but miss others, making it harder to learn speech and language. This can lead to behavioural and emotional challenges.

The Infant Hearing Program provides hearing screening for all newborns in hospital or community settings and:

- Identifies newborns with permanent hearing loss
- Supports their language development so they will be ready to start school
- Identifies and monitors children at risk of developing hearing loss



How is my baby's hearing screened?

The tests used are reliable, quick and give results right away. They measure the ear's or brain's response to soft sounds played in your baby's ear and may use small stickers placed on your baby's head.

To prepare, please:

- Avoid lotion on your baby's head on the day of the screen
- Feed your baby just before the appointment
- Bring your baby sleeping or resting quietly in a car seat

And don't forget to bring:

- Baby's Ontario health card number (if available)
- Blanket and other items to calm your baby
- Extra diapers and clothes

Checking if your baby is at higher risk for hearing loss

Babies with certain risks for hearing loss will be monitored. The same sample collected by the hospital or midwife for the newborn blood spot screening can be screened for:

- Cytomegalovirus infection – babies usually show no symptoms at birth but hearing loss could develop later
- Some common genetic risk factors – there is usually no family history of hearing loss

You may choose to:

- Consent** – You will only be contacted with risk factor results if a risk is found.
- Decline** – Your baby will not have the risk factor screen. Any change in hearing may not be found right away and could delay speech and language development.

What if my baby does not pass the hearing screen?

Your baby will be referred to an audiologist with the Infant Hearing Program who has the training and equipment needed for a full hearing assessment.

Can hearing loss happen later in my child's life?

Hearing loss can develop during childhood. You should have your baby's hearing tested by an audiologist if you have concerns about their hearing, speech or language development.

For more information please visit:
ontario.ca/infanthearing