

Your newborn baby's hearing screen



Milestones in your baby's hearing

Use these 'milestones' in normal hearing development to monitor your baby's hearing as he/she grows:

Birth to three months

- Is startled by or jumps when there is a sudden noise.
- Stirs, wakes up or cries when someone talks (loudly) or makes a noise.
- Recognises your voice and quietsens when you speak.

Three to six months

- Turns eyes towards an interesting sound.
- Appears to listen to voices and other sounds.
- Awakes easily to sound.

Six to twelve months

- Turns head to soft sounds.
- Understands "no" and "bye-bye".
- Begins to copy speech sounds.

Please contact your GP, community child health nurse or paediatrician if you have concerns about your child's hearing ability or language development at any time, even if your baby passed the newborn hearing screen.



If you miss your screen, please contact your birth hospital:

Contact details

For more information about the screening program, contact:

WA Newborn Hearing Screening Program

Phone: (08) 9340 8366

Email: hearingscreening@health.wa.gov.au

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Produced by Child & Adolescent Health Service
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A hearing screen is available to all newborn babies in care at this hospital. This is a free service funded by the Department of Health, Western Australia.

Why screen my baby's hearing?

- Approximately one baby in every 1,000 is born with a hearing loss in both ears (bilateral hearing loss).
- Newborn screening of babies enables this problem to be identified and treated quickly.
- Early treatment helps your baby's speech, language and learning development.
- Early intervention provides parents with support and information as soon as possible.

How is the screen done?

Your baby's hearing will be screened by Automated Auditory Brainstem Response (AABR). Three separate leads are placed on your baby's forehead, back of the neck and behind the shoulder using adhesive pads.

A small earphone 'cup' is placed over your baby's ears. This makes a sound, and the leads measure the response from your baby's ears to that sound. The screen doesn't hurt your baby in any way.

When is the screen done?

- Screening may be done anytime after your baby is 12 hours old.
- You will be asked (usually before the birth) whether you would like your baby to have the screen.



What if my baby misses the hearing screen in hospital?

If you come home from hospital before your baby has the screen, please contact your birth hospital to make arrangements for your baby to be screened.

The results

The hearing screen measures your baby's hearing response at the time of the screen only. The results will be:

- discussed with you straight after the test
- noted in your baby's medical records.

In some babies, an irregular result may occur due to something other than deafness, such as:

- fluid or other matter that has entered the ear canal during the birth process
- temporary middle ear fluid
- the area where the screen takes place being too noisy or your baby being too restless.

If there is any concern about the results, a follow-up screen will be recommended.

Follow-up screen

The follow-up screen, if required, is usually done before discharge from hospital. If this is not possible, you will be offered an appointment in an outpatient clinic.

You will be asked to give consent for the hospital to send all of your baby's screen results to your preferred GP, paediatrician and local child health centre. This will help to ensure that your baby receives follow-up care as necessary.

If there are any concerns about your baby's hearing after the follow-up screen, you will be referred to a paediatric audiologist. The audiologist is specially trained to test the hearing of babies and young children, and will ensure that your baby receives the best possible care.

Risk factors for hearing loss

A few rare causes of hearing loss are not picked up by the standard hearing screen. With some conditions, a baby's hearing may be normal at birth but gradually worsen over time.

Children with any risk factors listed below should be tested by an audiologist every six months:

- A strong family history of permanent hearing loss from a young age.
- Exposure to a congenital infection such as Toxoplasmosis, Rubella, Cytomegalovirus, Herpes or Syphilis.
- Some syndromes, such as Down syndrome (see your GP for further information).

If your baby has one of the above-mentioned risk factors, please inform the person who is performing the hearing screen.