

BC Early Hearing Program

A service of the Provincial Health Services Authority

Newborn Hearing Screening

A sound start for your baby

Knowing that your baby has good hearing is important. Babies start to learn speech and language from the moment they are born. If your baby can't hear well, they may have problems learning to talk and developing their language skills. Newborn hearing tests are important for families, because much can be done if hearing loss is caught early in a baby's life.

Your child is never too young to have a hearing check. As part of the BC Early Hearing Program (BCEHP), simple and safe screening tests are used to check hearing after birth.

How common is hearing loss in infants?

About one of every 300 newborns is born with hearing loss. This number increases for babies who require special care at birth. There are no obvious signs to tell us which infant has hearing loss, and without early screening, many go undetected until they are young children or school age. Over half of hearing losses are found in otherwise healthy infants who have no hearing loss in the family or other risk factors for hearing loss.

How is my baby's hearing screened?

Screening can occur in a hospital (before baby goes home) or in a local public health hearing clinic. Your baby will receive either a screening test called an Otoacoustic Emission test or one called an Auditory Brainstem Response test. Both types of screening tests are very safe and will not hurt your baby. Soft sounds are played in the baby's ears while a computer measures the response from the baby. Screening tests work best with sleeping or quiet babies.

What if my baby doesn't get screened in the hospital?

For babies who were not screened while in the hospital, hearing screening is offered at your local hearing clinic. Contact your local health authority (look in the blue pages of your phone book) to find the clinic nearest you.



What if my baby does not pass the screening?

When a baby does not pass the first hearing screening, this does not necessarily mean the baby has hearing loss. There are several reasons why some babies need a second hearing screening. Sometimes it is difficult to get clear readings on young babies, and more than one appointment is required. There may be temporary fluid in the baby's middle ear that can make it difficult to get an accurate result.

Most babies will pass the second hearing screening. If it is required, it is very important to take your baby for follow-up testing. The best way to be sure about your baby's hearing is to attend all follow-up appointments.

How is information about my baby shared?

The BC Early Hearing Program (BCEHP) is a program of the Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA). To help us provide services to your family, the BCEHP may need to share information about your child with professionals who provide services to families as part of the program. These professionals may be in other hospitals, hearing clinics, health units, child development centres, early intervention programs, education centres, the Ministry of Health or the University of British Columbia.

Personal information is gathered by these health authority professionals under the *Health Authorities Act* and the *Hospitals Act* and is provided to the BCEHP and the PHSA under the province's *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, section 26(c). The information is used by the BCEHP to help us determine how well we are meeting families' needs, how we can improve our program and services and how we can assure quality of care.

For more information about the collecting or sharing of information by the BCEHP, contact either the BCEHP provincial program director at (250) 519-5725 or the privacy officer in your local health authority.

For more information about early hearing screening, visit the BCEHP website at www.phsa.ca/earlyhearing.