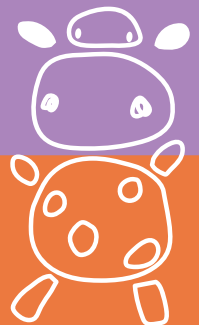


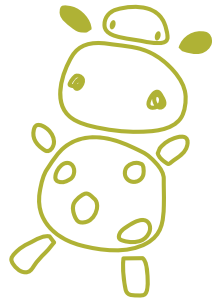
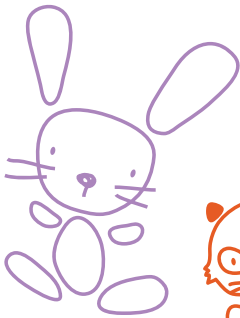


Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Your Baby's Hearing Screening Test

For babies who have received special or intensive care (NICU)





Your Baby's Hearing Screening Test

Your baby will be offered a series of health checks in the first few weeks of life. These will include a hearing screening test. The test uses two simple methods to check the hearing of your newborn baby.

Why screen my baby's hearing?

About three in every 1,000 babies who have spent at least two whole days in a special care baby unit, or a neonatal intensive care unit, (NICU) have a hearing loss in one or both ears. It is not easy to identify that a young baby has a hearing loss. This hearing screening test will allow babies who do have a hearing loss to be identified early. Early identification is known to be important for the development of the child. It also means that support and information can be provided to parents at an early stage.

Is there a risk my baby may have a hearing loss?

There are some known factors, which may put your baby at risk of having a hearing loss.

These are listed below:

- Your baby has needed special or intensive care in early infancy.
- Some medical conditions. You can ask your paediatrician (baby doctor) for more information about these.
- Other members of your baby's family, including grandparents, aunts and uncles, have had a hearing loss since birth or very early childhood.

When and where does the screening take place?

The screening test can usually be done before your baby leaves hospital. If this is not possible, we will contact you to let you know when it could be carried out and where it could be done, subject to your consent.

Will the hearing screening test be painful for my baby?

No. It does not hurt and is not uncomfortable. The screen will usually be done while your baby is asleep or settled.

What does the hearing screening test involve?

A trained hearing screener carries out the screening test. There are two main ways of screening babies' hearing:

1 Automated Otoacoustic Emissions (AOAE)

- The screener places a small soft tipped earpiece in the outer part of your baby's ear. Clicking sounds are sent down the ear.
- When an ear receives sound the inner part, known as the cochlea, usually produces an echo.
- The screening equipment can pick up this echo.

2 Automated Auditory Brainstem Response (AABR)

- The screener places three small sensors on your baby's head and neck.
- Soft headphones, specially made for babies, are placed over your baby's ears and a series of clicking sounds are played.
- The hearing screening equipment measures how well your baby's ears respond to sound.

Both screening methods are simple, completely safe and painless. You can stay with your baby throughout the screening tests. If your baby is in the special care baby unit, or a neonatal intensive care unit, (NICU) and you are not always able to visit in the daytime, you may be offered the option to have the screening done in your absence.

When will I get the results of the hearing screening test?

- If you attend the screening test we will give you the results immediately.
- If you are not present at the time of the screening test we will give you the results shortly afterwards.
- If you have any concerns or questions about your baby's results contact the Newborn Hearing Screening Programme, the telephone number is listed at the back of this booklet.

What do the results mean if the hearing screening test shows a clear response from both of my baby's ears?

This means that your baby is unlikely to have a hearing loss. The Newborn Hearing Screening Programme is a very reliable way of detecting hearing loss early. Children can develop or acquire a hearing loss later on so it is important to check your child's hearing as they grow up.

After the hearing screening test we will give you two *Checklists* of sounds. These show the sort of sounds your baby should react to and make as they grow.

Further checks may be arranged for your child even when the screening test shows clear responses. If you have any concerns about your child's hearing, discuss them with your public health nurse or general practitioner (family doctor). Your child's hearing can be tested at any age.

What do the results mean if the hearing screening test doesn't show a clear response from one or both of my baby's ears?

This often happens and does not necessarily mean that your baby has a hearing loss.

There are a number of reasons why it might be difficult to check your baby's hearing:

- Your baby may have been unsettled at the time of the screening test.
- There may be fluid, or a temporary blockage, in the ear after birth. This is normal and will pass after a short time.
- There may have been background noise when the screening test was carried out.

You will be asked to bring your baby to the Audiology Clinic (hearing clinic) where further tests will be carried out to measure your baby's hearing. We will give you a leaflet explaining what this involves.

What is the likelihood of my baby having a hearing loss?

Most babies will record clear responses to sound at the screening tests, and at any further tests carried out by an audiologist (a person who specialises in hearing). There is, however, a possibility that your baby may have a hearing loss. About three in every 1,000 who have spent at least two whole days in intensive care have a hearing loss.

Finding out that your baby has a hearing loss early means that you and your baby will get appropriate advice and support right from the start.

Where can I get further information?

If you would like more information about your baby's hearing screening test, you can contact the Newborn Hearing Screening Programme, the telephone number and contact details are listed at the back of this booklet.



Content kindly supplied by NHS Newborn Hearing Screening Programme /
National Screening Committee, UK