

Newborn Screening – First Test

What is newborn screening?

Newborn screening is the testing of a sample of blood from newborn babies to check for rare health problems, called disorders. If these disorders are found early, they can be treated. Treatment can prevent babies from developing disabilities or serious illness.

As directed by the Government of Ontario, health care providers must offer newborn screening to parents of all babies born in Ontario. The standard of care at our hospital is for all babies to have newborn screening before leaving the hospital.

Why does my baby need a screening test?

A screening test shows whether there is a high or low risk that your baby has any of these disorders. If your baby has a high risk of developing a disorder, he or she will have more tests. If tests show your baby has a disorder, your baby can be treated to prevent serious problems later in life.

When is this test done?

The screening test can be done after your baby is 24 hours old. The best time for this test is when your baby is 48 to 72 hours old. It is usually done just before you take your baby home.

If your baby is in a special care nursery, the timing of this test may vary. Your baby's doctor, nurse or midwife will give you more information.

How is this test done?

The screening test is done by taking a few drops of blood from your baby's heel. The blood is collected on a special paper, called a Newborn Screening Specimen Card, and sent to the Newborn Screening Program Laboratory for testing.

What happens if I leave the hospital before my baby is 24 hours old?

If your baby's screening test was done before 24 hours of age, **your baby must have a second screening test within 5 days**. It is your responsibility to arrange to have this test repeated.

We will give you a Newborn Discharge Screening Form and Newborn Screening Specimen Card to take to a Newborn Screening Laboratory (lab) for the second test. The form lists the lab locations where you can take your baby. If you use a lab that is not on the list, call first to make sure the lab can do this test.

How do I get the results of my baby's screening test?

The Newborn Screening Laboratory mails a report of the test results to your hospital and/or health care provider. The report will be filed in your baby's health record.

If your baby's screening test is "negative", it means that your baby has a low risk of developing the disorders. More than 99% of babies screened have a "negative" result.

If your baby's screening test is "positive", it does not necessarily mean that your baby has a disorder, but only that further testing is needed.

Your baby's health care provider will contact you right away to make arrangements for follow-up at a hospital where specialists can do more tests. If a diagnosis of a disorder is made, your baby will be treated and your family will get more information and support.

For more information about Newborn Screening:

- **Read the pamphlet "Newborn Screening: A healthy start leads to a healthier life" from the Ontario Newborn Screening Program**
- **Visit the Ontario Newborn Screening Program's website: www.newbornscreening.on.ca**
- **Talk with your nurse, doctor, midwife or health care provider**