

Newborn hearing screening

Alberta's **Early Hearing Detection & Intervention Program** is a provincial screening program that aims to identify permanent hearing loss as early as possible in a baby's life.

The program:

- **Screens** babies for hearing loss by 1 month of age
- **Diagnoses** permanent hearing loss by 3 months of age
- **Ensures access** to hearing loss support by 6 months of age



Why is newborn hearing screening important?

Your baby's hearing is important for many areas of child and brain development.

Having your baby's hearing screened is the best way to find hearing loss. Most babies have typical hearing, but some babies have hearing loss. Finding hearing loss early helps babies get support sooner.

How is hearing screening done?

While your baby is quiet or sleeping, soft sounds are played into your baby's ears, and a computer checks how your baby is hearing sound. The hearing screening test is safe, painless and free.

When is hearing screening done?

Screening will be offered to most babies before leaving the hospital. If your baby left the hospital before screening took place or your baby was born at home, you will be contacted and offered screening at a public health or community health centre.

When will I get the results?

You will get the results as soon as the screening is done. The results are "pass" or "did not pass".

What does a pass result mean?

It means that your baby is hearing well on the day of the screening. Additional hearing testing may be recommended if your baby has certain health conditions or risk factors that can affect hearing in the future. If your baby needs follow-up you will be contacted by a public health audiology clinic.

What if my baby doesn't pass the hearing screening?

Your baby will need a special hearing test called a diagnostic Auditory Brainstem Response test. The test is safe, painless, and free. It checks how your baby's hearing nerve and brain respond to sound. This test is done by an audiologist at a public health audiology clinic. You will be contacted to book an appointment.

Monitoring your baby's hearing after screening

You can get an idea of how well your baby can hear by watching how they respond to your voice and other sounds. Hearing is important for learning to speak and to understand spoken language. It's a good idea to monitor your baby's hearing as they grow.

Each baby is unique and will develop at their own pace. You know your baby best. If you're concerned about your baby's hearing, talk to your healthcare provider or call Health Link at 811.

How your baby uses their hearing as they grow

By 2 months your baby

- Is soothed and quiets to your voice
- Is startled by loud sounds
- Begins to make sounds like coos and goos

By 4 months your baby

- Starts to recognize familiar voices and other sounds
- Turns their head towards sounds
- Begins to babble and copy sounds they hear
- May stir or wake from sleep when someone talks or there's a sudden noise

By 6 months your baby

- Interacts more with people. Will look at people, things and sounds that interest them
- Babbles a lot; begins to imitate sounds and simple actions
- Starts making different sounds when they're happy or unhappy

By 12 months your baby

- Starts recognizing words and simple phrases like "no" and "bye-bye"
- Responds to their name
- Uses their voice to get your attention
- Continues to babble a lot; may start to use single words



Where can I get more information?

Learn more at primarycarealberta.ca/newbornhearingscreening or by calling Health Link 811.