

UNDERSTANDING Newborn Screening



What is newborn screening?

Newborn screening is a program for testing all babies for *some* health conditions. If one of these health conditions is found, it can often be treated. Early detection and treatment may help avoid more serious health problems later in life.

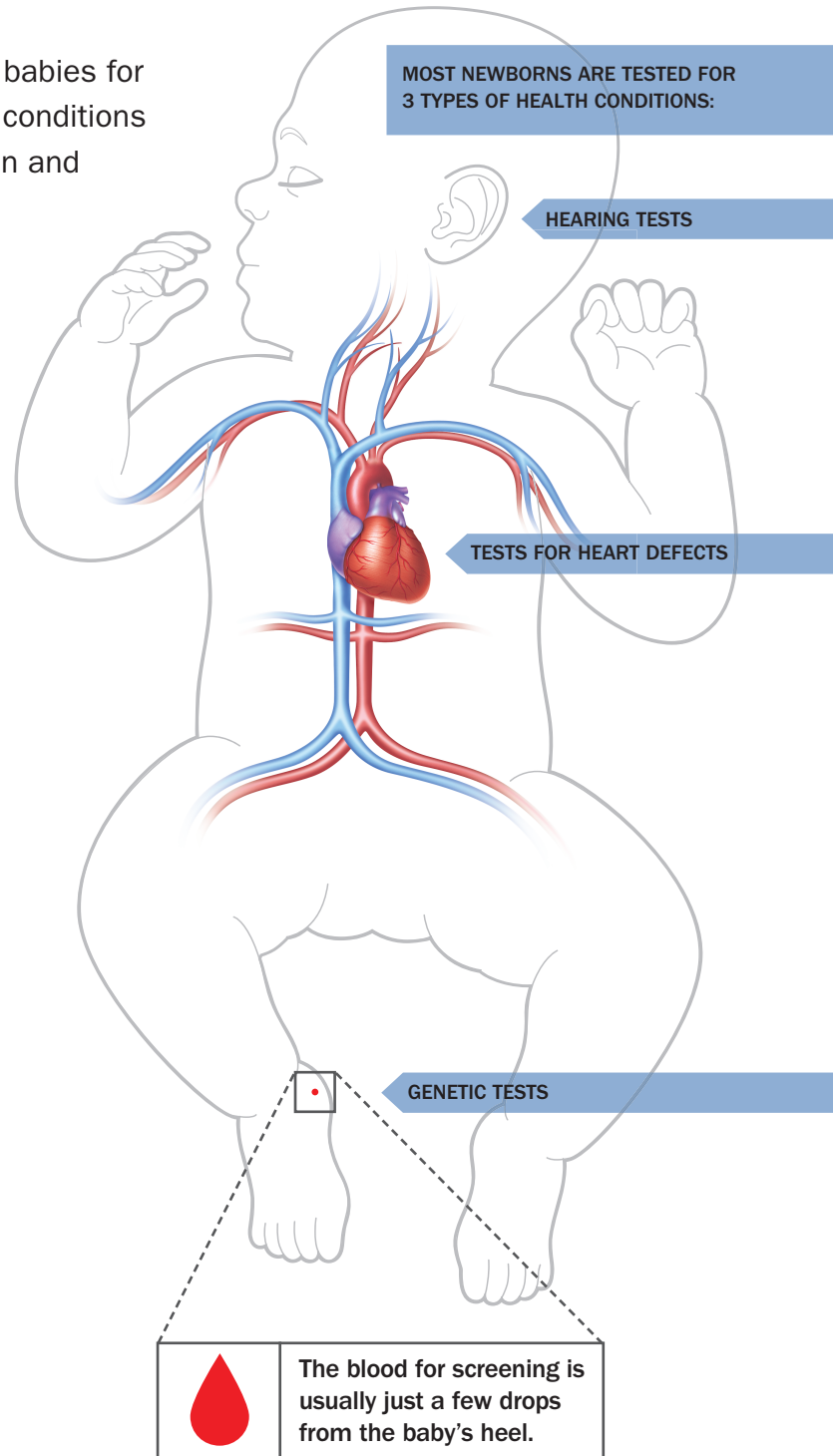
Is newborn screening the same everywhere in the United States?

Each state runs its own newborn screening program. As a result, there are some differences between states. If you are concerned about a particular condition, talk to your health care team.

Which health conditions are covered by newborn screening?

The health conditions included in newborn screening programs vary by state. In general, the conditions fall into 3 categories:

1. Genetic – all states screen for at least 20 different genetic conditions, including:
 - **Hypothyroidism**
 - **Cystic fibrosis**
 - **Sickle cell anemia**
 - **Phenylketonuria**
 - **Vitamin B12** disorders
2. Hearing loss – almost all states screen for hearing loss
3. Critical **congenital** heart defects (CCHD) – some, but not all, states screen for this group of conditions



Understanding Newborn Screening (continued)

When is newborn screening performed?

Babies are initially screened within 24 to 48 hours after birth. All babies born in a hospital are screened automatically. If the baby is sick or unable to eat, the screening tests may have to be repeated.

How is newborn screening performed?

The screening test depends on the condition.

- Genetic conditions require a blood test. The health care team will prick your baby's heel and put a few drops of blood on special paper. This paper is sent to a laboratory for testing
- For the hearing test, a small, soft speaker is placed into your baby's ear. The test takes 5 to 10 minutes and is often done while the baby is sleeping
- Screening for heart defects includes **pulse oximetry**, which measures the amount of oxygen in the blood. For this test, small sensors are attached to the baby's hand and/or foot. The test takes 5 to 10 minutes

What happens if my baby's screening results are not normal?

Most babies have normal screening results. If one or more of the results are not normal, your baby will need more testing. If the results of the additional tests are not normal, your health care team will talk with you about next steps. Many conditions found using newborn screening can be treated.

Glossary

Congenital – present at birth

Cystic fibrosis – genetic disease that affects the lungs and digestive system

Hypothyroidism – underactive thyroid, a gland that produces hormones to control many of the body's functions

Phenylketonuria – genetic disease that keeps the body from breaking down a substance found in foods that contain protein

Pulse oximetry – test that measures the amount of oxygen in the blood using a sensor on the skin

Sickle cell anemia – genetic disease that causes red blood cells to form in an abnormal shape

Vitamin B12 – important nutrient for the body's nerve and blood cells

Ask the health care team when you have questions—they are there to help.

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