

AAP News Parent Plus

INFORMATION FROM YOUR PEDIATRICIAN

Why you should say yes to the test: newborn procedures explained

You did everything possible to take care of your baby during pregnancy. After your delivery, routine procedures can ensure a healthy start for your newborn.

The following screenings and tests are recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) for all newborns. If your baby needs to be retested or rescreened after leaving the hospital, be sure to follow up promptly.

- **Vitamin K injection:** Because most babies are low in vitamin K after birth, an injection is given. The AAP has supported this routine hospital procedure since 1961 to prevent unexpected bleeding in the first week of life.
- **Eye drops:** Erythromycin drops prevent an eye infection that can lead to blindness. The infection can be spread from mother to baby in the birth canal. The drops are given to every newborn, even if the mother tested negative for a birth canal infection.
- **Heel stick:** All babies are required by their state to get tested for metabolic disorders before they leave the hospital. This is done by drawing a few drops of blood from the baby's heel. The blood is sent to a laboratory for testing that can identify babies who need medical care, sometimes before they show signs of a problem. To see what disorders are tested for in your state, visit bit.ly/1FCUqsq.
- **Pulse oximetry test:** Critical congenital heart disease affects eight of every 1,000 newborns annually. It can be detected by placing a sensor on the baby's skin to measure oxygen in the blood and heart rate. Early detection can prevent disability or death, but not all heart defects are found through screening. For more information, visit <http://1.usa.gov/1B0pEHh>.
- **Hepatitis B vaccine:** All newborns should get the first dose of this vaccine before they leave the hospital. It protects against a contagious liver disease that can cause lifelong illness. Mothers can spread the virus to babies at birth. Thanks to the vaccine, the number of people with chronic disease has decreased by 82% since 1991.
- **Hearing screening:** Two to three children out of every 1,000 are born deaf or hard of hearing. The hospital can test your baby's hearing using one of two methods. Otoacoustic emissions testing involves placing a small probe in the ear to measure how the auditory inner ear responds to the sounds. Auditory brainstem response testing involves putting probes on the baby's scalp to measure brain waves' response to sounds. Getting help early for hearing-impaired children is important.

Find resources at <http://bit.ly/1lzoghz>.

— Trisha Koriath

