



Newborn Hearing Screening

If your baby is delivered at a Kaiser Permanente hospital, your newborn's hearing will be tested before you go home.

Why test a baby?

You can't tell from looking if your baby has hearing loss. Testing is the best way to find out. Hearing loss can be detected soon after a baby is born.

Early testing makes a big difference. Babies begin learning in the first few months and years of life. (See "Ages and Stages" on reverse to learn more.) A baby with hearing loss may have a hard time developing language skills.

The sooner hearing loss is found, the sooner your baby can get care. You should also closely monitor your child's hearing as they grow. We recommend hearing screening for all newborns.

Do many babies have hearing loss?

Around 3 of every 1,000 babies born have some degree of hearing loss. About half of all babies with hearing loss don't have signs or risk factors (like serious illness or family history of deafness).

Some babies may develop hearing loss from repeated ear infections, meningitis, a head injury, or other medical conditions. Sometimes the reason isn't known.

How do we screen hearing?

The hearing screening is done before you and your baby leave the hospital. It takes only a few minutes while your baby sleeps and it doesn't hurt.

Soft sounds are played through earphones specially made for babies. Your baby's response to the sound is measured automatically. If your baby doesn't pass on the first try, we'll do a second screening before you go home.

You'll get the results before you leave the hospital. Your baby will receive either a hearing screening pass or a hearing screening referral.

Hearing screening pass

This means your baby hears normally in both ears at this time. It's important to pay attention to how your baby's language and speech develop. If you're worried about your baby's hearing, contact their doctor right away.

Hearing screening referral

This doesn't necessarily mean your baby has hearing loss. It isn't always possible to get a good hearing screen during the hospital stay.

Many babies need additional screening. We'll make this appointment for you. It's best to rescreen your baby between ages 1 week and 1 month. This is separate from your 2-week appointment with your baby's doctor.

How can I prepare for my baby's hearing rescreening?

It helps if your baby is asleep during the test. To get ready for the hearing rescreening, you might:

- Try not to let your baby nap before the appointment, so they sleep during the test.
- Feed your baby just before testing to help them sleep.
- Bring a blanket, extra diapers, change of clothes, and extra formula, if used.
- Try to schedule a time when your baby is likely to sleep.

What happens after the rescreening?

You and your baby's doctor will get the results of the second screening. It's likely your baby will pass the rescreen. A few babies will need a more complete hearing evaluation.

Diagnostic hearing evaluation

If your baby didn't pass the rescreen, the next step is a hearing evaluation. This should be done as soon as possible.

The evaluation tests your baby's hearing in different ways to assess their overall hearing. Your baby needs to sleep comfortably during most of the test. (See tips above for preparing for rescreening.)

After the evaluation, if hearing loss is found, you'll be referred to care resources you and your baby will need.

Additional resources

- ✓ Learn more at kp.org.
- ✓ Watch a video on newborn hearing screening on your doctor's home page at kp.org/mydoctor.
- ✓ Call your local Health Education Department for other resources.

Hearing and Speech: Ages and Stages

Birth to 3 months

- Quiets to familiar voices or sounds
- Reacts to loud sounds: baby startles, blinks, stops sucking, cries, or wakes up
- Makes soft sounds when awake, gurgles

3 to 6 months

- Turns eyes or head toward sounds, voices, noise-making toys, dog barking
- Starts to make speech-like sounds, "ga," "ooh," "ba," and p, b, m sounds
- Reacts to a change in your tone of voice

6 to 9 months

- Responds to their name and looks when called
- Understands simple words, "no," "bye-bye," "juice"
- Babbles, "da da da," "ma ma ma," "ba ba ba"

9 to 12 months

- Responds to both soft or loud sounds
- Repeats single words and imitates animal sounds

- Points to favorite toys or foods when asked

12 to 18 months

- Uses 10 or more words
- Follows simple spoken directions, "get the ball"
- Points to people, body parts, or toys when asked
- "Bounces" to music

18 to 24 months

- Uses 20 or more words
- Combines 2 or more words, "more juice," "what's that?"
- Uses many different consonant sounds at the beginning of words, b, g, m
- Listens to simple stories and songs

2 to 3 years

- Uses 2- to 3-word sentences
- At 2 years, people can understand what the child says some of the time (25 to 50 percent)
- At 3 years, people can understand what the child says most of the time (50 to 75 percent)
- Follows 2-step instructions, "get the ball and put it on the table"