

# Newborn Hearing Screening Program

## The California Newborn Hearing Screening Program

The California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS), Children's Medical Services (CMS) has implemented a statewide comprehensive Newborn Hearing Screening Program to help identify hearing loss in infants. The Program helps guide families to the appropriate services needed to develop communication skills.

Families of infants delivered at California hospitals which have been certified by DHCS to participate in the California Newborn Hearing Screening Program (NHSP) will be offered the opportunity to have their baby's hearing screened. Infants who do not pass the screening in the hospital will be referred for additional testing after discharge.

DHCS is contracting with Hearing Coordination Centers to work with the hospitals in developing hearing screening programs, to perform quality assurance activities, and to follow infants who need additional services.

## How Do We Screen Hearing?

The Newborn Hearing Screening takes place before mother and baby leave the hospital. The screening takes only a few minutes while your baby sleeps. Soft sounds are played through earphones specially made for babies. Your baby's responses to the sound would be automatically measured by Otoacoustic Emissions (OAE) or Auditory Brainstem Response (ABR).

Today's easy screening methods are very reliable. Rarely will a baby with hearing loss be missed.

## Who Pays for Hearing Screening?

The cost of the Newborn Hearing Screening may be covered by your health insurance. Medi-Cal will pay for screening for eligible babies.

## Hearing & Speech Ages & 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, *baby 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 own 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 beginning of words, *b, g, m*
- Listens to simple stories and songs

### 2 Years to 3 Years

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

## How Many Babies Have a Hearing Loss?

Serious hearing loss is found in about 2-4 out of 1,000 babies. About 50% of babies with hearing loss have no known signs or risk factors, like serious illness or family history of deafness. Some babies develop hearing loss later in life from repeated ear infections, meningitis, head injury or other medical conditions. Sometimes babies lose their hearing and the reason is never known.

## Why Test a Baby?

Hearing loss can be invisible. Now, technology makes it possible to detect a hearing loss in the early days of a baby's life.

The first months and years of a child's life are very important for developing communication skills. A baby who has a hearing loss or deafness may have difficulty in developing normal language skills or may not do well in school. This is why it is important to identify the loss early and provide special services to the baby and family.

The American Academy of Pediatrics and other professional organizations recommend hearing screening for all newborns and encourage close monitoring of children's hearing throughout the early years.

*The goal of California's Newborn Hearing Screening Program is to identify babies with hearing loss and link them with services by six months of age. The program has Hearing Coordination Centers that work with families, health care providers and hospitals to make sure children get needed services.*

*The Newborn Hearing Screening Program collects information about your baby's hearing screenings as per Section 124119 of the Health and Safety Code. The Hearing Coordination Centers may use this information to assist you and your baby in getting services you may need. It is possible that the Hearing Coordination Center may contact you about the follow-up services.*



**For more information Call  
Toll Free 1-877-388-5301  
or visit us on the web at  
[www.dhcs.ca.gov/services/nhsp](http://www.dhcs.ca.gov/services/nhsp)**