



# Screening for Newborn Heart Problems

## Why check newborns for heart problems?

During pregnancy only half of babies with heart problems are noticed. Babies who look healthy at birth can also have heart problems. At BC Women's all babies will be checked for a group of heart problems called Critical Congenital Heart Diseases. These are a group of heart problems that babies are born with. Congenital means the baby has it at birth. We are not sure what causes these heart problems to happen.

Babies, who go home with an unknown heart problem, can come back to the hospital very sick. At BC Women's your baby will be checked for heart problems. This will help your doctor or midwife care for your baby sooner.

## How soon after birth will my baby be checked?

This will be done before your baby leaves hospital, at 24 to 48 hours after birth.

## How do we check for critical congenital heart problems?

A simple and painless machine, called pulse oximeter is used to measure how much oxygen is in your baby's blood. It takes less than 5 minutes to get a reading.

You may hold your baby during the test to help keep him or her warm and quiet. A nurse will attach a "sensor" on your baby's right hand and then on his or her foot. This sensor is attached to the machine. The machine measures the level of oxygen in your baby's blood.

## What does this mean for my baby?

A baby could have a heart problem, and we may not see it. Doing this test will find most heart problems. A normal test means that the chance that your baby has a heart problem is very low.

## What happens if the oxygen level in my baby's blood is low?

A low oxygen level means there might be a heart problem. More tests are needed.

A doctor or midwife will come check your baby. They will look for signs that might help them see why the oxygen level is low. A baby doctor (Pediatrician) or a baby heart doctor (Pediatric Cardiologist) will be involved in your baby's care if needed.

## Questions?

If you have any questions please ask the doctor, midwife, or nurse that is caring for you and your baby.

