

BC Early Hearing Program

A service of the Provincial Health Services Authority

Can your baby hear the sounds you do?



A sound start for your baby

The sounds of nature are all around us. Do you know if your baby can hear the birds chirping or the wind in the trees? Knowing that your baby has good hearing is important. Babies start to learn speech and language from the moment they are born. If your baby can't hear well, he or she may have problems learning to talk and developing language skills. Newborn hearing tests are important for families, because much can be done if hearing loss is caught early in a baby's life.

Your child is never too young to have a hearing check. As part of the BC Early Hearing Program (BCEHP), simple and safe screening tests are used to check hearing after birth.

How common is hearing loss in infants?

About one in every 300 newborns is born with hearing loss. This number increases for babies who require special care at birth. There are no obvious signs to tell us which infant

has hearing loss, and without early screening, many go undetected until they are young children or school age. Over half of hearing losses are found in otherwise healthy infants.

How is my baby's hearing screened?

Screening can occur in hospital (before baby goes home) or in a local public health hearing clinic. Your baby will receive a screening test. The test is very safe and will not hurt your baby. Soft sounds are played in the baby's ears while a computer measures the responses from the baby. Screening tests work best with sleeping or quiet babies.

What if my baby didn't get screened?

For babies who were not screened while in the hospital, screening is arranged through your local public health hearing clinic or by other health unit staff. You will be contacted for an appointment. If you have not received a call within two weeks of your baby's birth, contact your local health authority (look in the blue pages of your phone book) to find the clinic nearest you.

What if my baby does not pass the screening?

When a baby does not pass the first hearing screening, this does not necessarily mean the baby has hearing loss. There are several reasons why some babies need a second hearing screening. Sometimes it is difficult to get clear readings on young babies, and more than one appointment is required. There may be temporary fluid in the baby's ear that can make it difficult to get an accurate result.

Most babies will pass the second hearing screening. If it is required, it is very important to take your baby for follow-up testing. The best way to be sure about your baby's hearing is to attend all follow-up appointments.

How is information about my baby shared?

The BC Early Hearing Program (BCEHP) is a program of the Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA). To help us provide services to your family, the BCEHP may need to share information about your child with professionals who provide services to families as part of the program. These professionals may be in other hospitals, hearing clinics, health units, child development centres, early intervention programs, education centres, the Ministry of Health or the University of British Columbia.

Personal information is gathered by these health authority professionals under the *Health Authorities Act* and the *Hospitals Act* and is provided to the BCEHP and the PHSA under the province's *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, section 26(c). The information is used by the BCEHP to help us determine how well we are meeting families' needs, how we can improve our program and services and how we can assure quality of care.

For more information about the collecting or sharing of information by the BCEHP, contact either the BCEHP provincial program director at (250) 519-5725 or the privacy officer in your local health authority.

For more information about early hearing screening, visit the BCEHP website at www.phsa.ca/earlyhearing.



As your baby grows, check his or her speech, language and listening:

By about two months, most babies...

- startle to loud sound
- quiet to familiar voices
- make vowel sounds like "ohh," "ahh"

By about four months, most babies...

- look for sounds with eyes
- start babbling
- use a variety of pitches in squeals, whimpers and chuckles

By about six months, most babies...

- turn head toward sound
- try to imitate changes in voice pitch
- babble (ba-ba, ma-ma, ga-ga)

By about nine months, most babies...

- imitate speech sounds of others
- understand "no-no" or "bye-bye"
- will locate sound source at eye level or below

By about 12 months, most babies...

- say two or three words
- give a toy when asked for one
- respond to singing or music