

INFO SHEET

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Early Hearing Detection and Intervention

Speech-Language and Audiology Canada (SAC) supports newborn hearing screening as an essential first step in the strategy for identifying children with permanent childhood hearing loss (PCHL) and initiating family-centred audiologic and communication intervention.

Newborn hearing screening uses an inexpensive and painless test to quickly and accurately screen infants for PCHL. The screening process is simple and should be performed before a baby is discharged from the hospital.

Hearing and communication are critical to a child’s development – any impairment can have a cascading effect on other aspects of a child’s life. Extended periods of auditory deprivation can significantly impact a child’s overall brain development and sensory integration. If undiagnosed and untreated, especially during those critical first years of life, hearing loss can result in language, cognitive, academic, social and emotional difficulties. The most direct way to minimize the impact of hearing loss on a child’s life is through early identification and intervention.

1, 3, 6

SAC and many other organizations recommend the following timeline:

- No later than **one** month of age: initial hearing screening.
- No later than **three** months of age: confirmation of hearing loss.
- No later than **six** months of age: enrollment in an early intervention program.

RISK FACTORS

All children, with or without risk factors for hearing loss, should have their communication development and milestones monitored at regular medical check-ups. Some children who have a higher risk of hearing loss may require more frequent monitoring. Risk factors include:

- Family history of hearing loss
- Prematurity
- Low birth weight
- Lack of oxygen (anoxia)
- Admission to neo-natal intensive care units
- Craniofacial anomalies (e.g. cleft lip, cleft palate)
- Genetic disorders
- Toxemia during pregnancy
- Maternal infections including rubella, cytomegalovirus and herpes simplex virus
- Maternal diabetes

THE FACTS

- Approximately 3-5 babies per 1,000 born each year have some degree of hearing loss.
- A newborn hearing screening test costs about \$35.
- Historically, hospitals only screened high-risk babies for PCHL. However, studies show that nearly 50% of all babies with hearing loss have no high risk factors.
- Unfortunately, newborn hearing screening is not yet available to all babies in Canada.

If your baby did not get a hearing screening at birth, contact an audiologist.

If you suspect hearing loss at any age, don’t delay. Find an audiologist near you at www.communicationhealth.ca