

# YOUR NEWBORN BABY'S HEART SCREENING

Before leaving the hospital, your baby will have a screening for Critical Congenital Heart Disease (CCHD). This is a check for potential heart issues that need early detection and treatment.

## What is Critical Congenital Heart Disease?

Congenital Heart Disease (CHD) affects the heart's structure or blood flow and impacts **nearly 1 out of every 100 babies born each year**. It is the most common birth defect. Some severe cases, called "critical" CHDs, require early detection and intervention, **occurring in 1 out of every 4 babies born with CHD** (roughly 25% of CHD cases).

To ensure a healthy start, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends all babies undergo a CCHD screening test before leaving the hospital.

## How is the screening done?

A pulse oximeter uses a light sensor that a healthcare team member will attach to your baby's right hand and either foot to measure how much oxygen is in the blood. It does not hurt and takes a few minutes.

## When will your baby be screened?

It is recommended for all babies to be screened before they go home. If you are unsure when your baby was screened, ask the nurse or doctor for the results. The test requires the baby to be at least 24 hours old or can take place just before they leave the hospital if going home earlier.

## What is considered a normal reading?

For healthy babies, readings between 95% to 100% on both hand and foot and a difference of 3% or less between the two are normal. Babies with heart or lung problems may have lower readings or a significant difference between their right hand and either foot.

## What if my baby passes the test?

If your baby passes the test, they can be safely sent home, indicating a low risk for critical congenital heart defects. Regular check-ups with the baby's doctor are still necessary.

## What if my baby does not pass?

If your baby does not pass, doctors may conduct further tests, like an echocardiogram (ultrasound of the heart), to take a closer look at the baby's heart and blood flow. Other tests may be done to understand lower oxygen levels. Your doctor will guide you based on your baby's test results if the reading is low.

## What to watch for after screening

Pulse ox identifies most, but not all babies with CCHD. If your baby passes, but shows signs such as tiredness during feedings, sweating, fast breathing, blueness around the lips and mouth, excessive sleepiness, puffiness, irritability, or difficulty soothing, contact your baby's doctor promptly.

For more information, talk with your doctor or nurse about this important newborn screen.

For online resources, you can visit the following websites: [HealthyChildren.org](https://www.healthychildren.org) (AAP's website for parents), [www.babysfirsttest.org](https://www.babysfirsttest.org), [Screening for Critical Congenital Heart Defects | Congenital Heart Defects \(CHDs\) | CDC or www.childrensnational.org](https://www.childrensnational.org)



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