



Public Health
England



NHS newborn hearing Screening Programme

Your baby's visit to the audiology clinic:
information for parents



Public Health England leads the NHS Screening Programmes

About this leaflet

This leaflet explains why your baby needs to see an audiologist for more tests at an audiology clinic and what those tests involve. An audiologist is a health professional who specialises in hearing.

Your baby's visit to the audiology clinic

Audiology clinics have special equipment to test your baby's hearing. These tests will give better information about your baby's hearing.

Early testing means you will know if your baby has a hearing loss when they are still very young. This is important for their future development.

Your baby needs more tests because their hearing screening tests did not show a clear response in 1 or both ears. About 2 to 3 babies in every 100 do not show a clear response and are referred to audiology.



Most babies tested at an audiology clinic are found to have satisfactory hearing. Some have a temporary hearing loss.

About 1 in 15 babies tested at the audiology clinic have a permanent hearing loss in 1 or both ears. Finding out early means you and your baby will get the right advice and support from the start.

It is important you attend the appointment. This is because you may not have noticed that anything is wrong.

Even babies who have a hearing loss usually react to some sounds. If your baby does have a hearing loss, it is important to find out as soon as possible.

What happens at the clinic?

The appointment will usually take about 1 to 2 hours. This includes time to settle your baby. The tests give more detailed information about your baby's hearing. They will not hurt or be uncomfortable for your baby. You can stay with your baby while they are tested.

The audiologist may use an otoacoustic emission (OAE) test. This involves putting a small soft-tipped earpiece in the outer part of your baby's ear. The earpiece sends clicking sounds down the ear. The inner part of the ear, known as the cochlea, usually produces a response when it receives sound. The testing equipment can pick up this response.

They may also use an auditory brainstem response (ABR) test. This involves placing small sensors on your baby's head.

Sounds at different frequencies are played in your baby's ears. A computer records the response so the audiologist can measure how well your baby's ears respond.

Your audiologist will tell you what the results mean and if your baby needs any more appointments.



Possible results

If you are told your baby has satisfactory hearing, this means they are unlikely to have a hearing loss. But children can develop a hearing loss later, so it is important to check their hearing as they grow up.

Your personal child health record book contains checklists of the sounds your baby should react to and the sounds they should make as they grow older.

It is important to check your child's hearing as they grow. If you have any concerns you should discuss them with your health visitor or GP. Your child's hearing can be tested again at any age.

If the tests show a hearing loss, your audiologist will explain what the results mean. Your baby may need more tests to measure the amount of hearing loss and type of hearing loss.

There are different types and levels of hearing loss. The results of the tests at the clinic will help the audiologist get the right support and information to you and your baby.



More information

You can contact the hospital that will carry out the test. You can also speak to your health visitor, midwife or audiology department.

Visit www.nhs.uk/newbornhearing

Contact the National Deaf Children's Society:

- freephone helpline 0808 800 8880 (10-5, Mon-Fri)
- email helpline@ndcs.org.uk
- website www.ndcs.org.uk

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