# Hearing Screening: Information for Parents

Hearing is very important for the normal development of all babies. Every year, about 12,000 babies are born with hearing loss in the United States. Even a small hearing loss in one ear can affect your baby’s communication skills. When babies cannot hear well, they may develop problems talking and understanding words. For this rea- son, all babies will have a hearing test before going home.

The hearing test is a painless procedure that is done when your baby is sleeping or still and quiet. This test measures how well the outer and inner ear work. It takes 10–20 minutes, unless the test has to be repeated. Special probes or earphones are placed in or around both of your baby’s ears and connected to the hearing screening machine. This will be used to test both ears.

If your baby does not pass the first hearing test, it will be repeated. If your baby is awake and moving too much or if your baby has fluid in his or her ears, the test will need to be repeated. If your baby does not pass the hearing test, your baby’s provider will refer you to someone who specializes in infant hearing. This specialist is called a *pediatric audiologist*. The audiologist has special skills and experience giving hearing tests and explaining what the results mean. Be sure to make and keep all appointments with your baby’s primary provider, as well as any hearing test appointments. Although hearing loss is serious, the sooner you know about it the sooner you can find help—and the better the outcome will be for your baby. If you need help and information, contact your state’s early hearing detection and intervention program.

Your baby’s hearing continues to develop over time. Even if your baby has passed the hearing test in the hospital, you will still need to watch your baby’s milestones of development. Some babies will require periodic hearing tests after they go home from the hospital. Talk to your provider about the milestones of development for hearing and talking. Y[ou can find more information at www.](http://www/) HealthyChildren.org. Under the tab “ages and stages,” [select baby 0–12 months. Visit www.babyhearing.org](http://www.babyhearing.org/) for more information.

