

If you choose not to provide your personal information, we will not be able to arrange any necessary follow up care your child requires after hearing screening. We will also not be able to contact you about future research projects and initiatives.

Frequently asked questions

My baby responds to loud noises—do they still need a newborn hearing screen or audiology assessment?

Hearing loss is more complex than just being able to hear loud sounds. Most babies with hearing loss will still react to loud sounds. The important sounds for speech and language development are soft sounds and these are difficult to test in newborns without specialist equipment.

Is newborn hearing screening safe? What are the risks of screening?

Hearing screening is quick and safe. Your baby might experience some brief discomfort when the ear couplers are removed. There is a small risk that the hearing screen might not identify a baby whose hearing needs further investigation.

What are the risks of not having a newborn hearing screen? Are there any alternatives to hearing screening?

The main risk of not having a hearing screen is delay in diagnosis if a baby has a hearing loss. Early diagnosis allows for early assistance which gives babies with a hearing loss the best possible chance at developing communication skills. There are no alternatives to newborn hearing screening.

Hearing can change over time

Hearing loss can develop over time, so it is important to pay attention to your baby's hearing as they grow. Speak to your maternal and child health nurse or family doctor if you have any questions or concerns about your child's hearing.

Any questions or concerns?

Contact VIHSP

Talk to a VIHSP hearing screener

VIHSP Area Manager

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Your baby's hearing screen



Your baby's hearing screen

Why is newborn hearing screening important?

A newborn hearing screen is one of the routine health checks your baby will have after birth. It is a free and quick check of your baby's hearing. It is provided by the Victorian Infant Hearing Screening Program (VIHSP), which is run by The Royal Children's Hospital. Hearing loss might not be obvious in the first few weeks of life and can affect speech and language development. Early detection means that babies with a hearing loss can get the best start in life.

How is a newborn hearing screen done?

With your consent, the hearing screener will place small stick-on sensors on your baby's forehead, cheek and back of the neck. The hearing screening device will play soft sounds into your baby's ears through couplers (soft earcups) placed over each ear. The sensors detect your baby's response to the sounds.

The screen is painless and will not usually unsettle your baby. It takes less than five minutes if your baby is settled or asleep and the room is quiet. You can hold or breastfeed your baby during the screen.

When will my baby have their newborn hearing screen?

We try to screen babies soon after birth, as long as they are well and settled. If your baby has been in a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit or Special Care Nursery, or born before 34 weeks gestation, we will wait to do the screen when your baby is well or nearly ready to go home from hospital.

What if my baby cannot be screened in hospital?

Some babies that are unsettled or discharge early might not get their newborn hearing screen before they leave hospital. If this happens we will contact you to arrange an outpatient appointment.

How will I find out the result of the hearing screen?

You will be given the result as soon as the screen is complete. A *pass* result means there was a clear response to the screen and no further screening is necessary. If there is not a clear response, the newborn hearing screen will be repeated a limited number of times. If your baby's final hearing screen does not show a clear response, they will be referred to an audiologist for detailed testing. A VIHSP Area Manager and the VIHSP Early Support Service will contact you to discuss this referral.

We will record your baby's hearing screening result in their *My Health, Learning and Development Record* (green book) and in the VIHSP database.

How is information about me and my baby recorded and used?

The VIHSP database is used to monitor and evaluate VIHSP and to connect infants and their families with services. VIHSP collects and uses information about you and your baby in line with Health Privacy Principles in the *Health Records Act 2001* and Information Privacy Principles in the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014*.

These acts also cover the use of information for evaluation, education and research.

VIHSP is committed to keeping the information collected confidential and secure from unauthorised access, use or loss.

To ensure that your baby is connected with the right services and treatment, information such as birth details, contact details and screening or audiology results may be shared between VIHSP and other professionals including:

- audiologists
- doctors
- maternal and child health nurses
- early childhood intervention services
- other health and education professionals.

VIHSP may use your information for the purposes of evaluation, education and research. You may be contacted about future projects. You can choose whether or not you want to find out more about those projects at the time. If projects involve research, these are conducted according to the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research*.

Please speak to the VIHSP Area Manager if you would like to know more about what happens to information collected by VIHSP. You can access or amend your personal information by contacting the Freedom of Information Office at The Royal Children's Hospital: www.rch.org.au/foi