



WHAT IS NEWBORN SCREENING?

Newborn screening (NBS) is a public health program that tests babies shortly after birth for serious but treatable conditions that may not show symptoms at birth. In Texas, newborns receive three screening tests shortly after birth: blood-spot based, hearing and critical congenital heart disease. Early detection and treatment can prevent serious illness, disability, or death.

Texas requires every baby receive two newborn screening blood spot-based tests for the conditions on the state newborn screening panel. Healthcare professionals collect a small blood sample using a heel stick and apply it to the newborn screening collection kit. The birth facility collects the first screen when the baby is 24 to 48 hours old. A pediatrician or other healthcare professional collects the second screen when the baby is 7 to 14 days old, a minimum of 168 hours. The physicians or other healthcare professionals then sends the specimen to the Texas Public Health Laboratory in Austin for testing.

Why does the Texas Newborn Screening program only provide qualitative test results?

The Texas Newborn Screening (NBS) Program reports qualitative results such as "normal" or "abnormal" and provides follow-up recommendations and timelines. Newborn screening identifies babies who may be at risk for certain conditions. It does not diagnose conditions.

The Texas NBS Laboratory develops, uses, and regularly reviews its own validated testing methods, reference ranges, and cutoff values to maintain accuracy. Because these values are specific to the Texas Laboratory's testing methods and instruments, physicians and other healthcare professionals should not compare them to values from outside laboratories.

However, they should review newborn screening results along with the clinical history of the baby. If symptoms, abnormal findings, or family history raise concerns, the physician or other healthcare professional should order diagnostic testing right away, regardless of the screening results. Follow-up recommendations may include diagnostic testing and consultation with condition-specific specialists.

Steps for Abnormal Results

- An abnormal result means the baby may be at a higher risk, not that the baby has the condition.
- Healthcare professionals need to conduct diagnostic testing to confirm or rule out conditions.
- The DSHS Clinical Care Coordination (CCC) Follow-Up Team provides healthcare professionals with the next steps when they report results. It is important to follow all recommendations made by CCC.
- Physicians and other health care professionals must ensure they complete confirmatory testing and immediately report results back to CCC in a timely manner.
- Contact DSHS CCC Staff at 512-776-3957 or newborn@dshs.texas.gov for support.



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