

Screening for Critical Heart Disease in Newborns

What is newborn critical heart disease?

Heart disease in newborns involves problems with the heart's structure that are present at birth. There are many types of heart disease that range from simple defects with no symptoms to complex defects. About two in 1,000 babies are born with a serious newborn heart disease. Health professionals refer to it as critical congenital heart disease (CCHD). It is important to find babies with CCHD as soon as possible to treat them.

How are newborns screened for critical heart disease?

There is a simple and pain-free screening test that measures how much oxygen is in your baby's blood. It can help find out if your baby's heart and lungs are working well. Screening may help find if your baby has CCHD. All babies should have this screening test; it can save lives.

The screen is done with an oxygen monitor that is attached to the outside of your baby's foot and hand for a few minutes that checks their oxygen level. The clinical staff does the screening test after 24 hours of age but before leaving the hospital. They place a narrow tape with a tiny sensor on the outside of your baby's right hand and one of their feet. The sensor connects to a machine that checks the oxygen level. The nurse then reads and records the results on the machine. The screening test is not painful and only takes a few minutes.

Your baby may need a specialist, like a pediatric cardiologist, for newborn heart problems. They will examine your baby and determine the type of care they need.

Is it possible for a baby with heart disease to have a passing result?

Yes, the oxygen level screening may not find all types of problems in your baby's heart. Your baby should continue to have regular doctor visits to monitor their health.

Important Signs & Symptoms

- Tires out when feeding
- Breathing fast or not breathing well
- Seems hard to wake

If your baby looks gray or blue around the lips or on the face, call 911.



Where can I get more information?

- Ask the health care provider caring for your baby about oxygen level screening (called pulse ox).
- Visit [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) (under the search term "CCHD") for information in English and Spanish from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- Visit dshs.texas.gov/newborn-screening-program/critical-congenital-heart-disease-cchd or scan the QR code below.



SCAN ME