Screening Your Newborn

Important Information for Parents About Newborn Blood Spot Screening

Congratulations!

The arrival of a new baby is an exciting time for a family. The California Newborn Screening Program tests every newborn for a group of rare disorders. This newborn screening can prevent serious health problems and save your baby’s life.

California Department of Public Health
Newborn Screening Program
www.cdph.ca.gov/NBS

What Is Newborn Screening?
Newborn screening checks for certain rare disorders using a baby’s blood sample. These disorders can cause serious health problems, including brain damage or death, if not treated early. The screening identifies most, but not all, of the babies who have these disorders. No screening is 100% accurate.

Why Does My Baby Need This Screening?
Babies with one of these disorders can look healthy at birth but still have a serious disease. Finding a disorder early means treatment can be started before health problems begin.

How Is the Screening Done?
A few drops of blood are taken from the baby’s heel and put on special filter paper. This is called a “blood spot collection card.” The card is then sent to a program-approved laboratory. The screening is safe and simple.

Is the Screening Given to All Babies?
California law requires a newborn screen on every baby born in the state. Hospitals, and midwives or others who deliver babies outside of hospitals, must collect a newborn screen 12–48 hours after the baby is born. Babies born in the hospital must have the screen before going home. You may refuse the screening for religious reasons only.

Which Conditions Are Screened for?
Newborn screening in California screens for over 80 conditions, including sickle cell disease and cystic fibrosis.

How Can I Get Results?
You will receive the pink and blue copy of the newborn screening form after the screening. Please first check that your contact information and health care provider are correct on the form. Your baby’s newborn screening results are sent to the doctor or clinic listed on the form.

Should I Save the Form Copies?
Save the pink form copy and try to bring it to your baby’s first check-up. Health care providers can also use the form number to get the screening result from the NBS Program.

What Do the Screening Results Mean?
Your provider will tell you if a result is “positive.” While concerning, this result does not mean that a baby has a certain disorder. It shows that a baby has an increased chance of having that disorder. Your provider will help you set up testing that can confirm or rule out the disorder.

What Happens to My Baby’s Blood Spots After the Screen?
California, like many other states, stores newborn screening blood spot collection cards. The cards may be used to improve the screening program or to develop screens for new disorders. The cards may also be used for studies about diseases in women and children. The cards do not have information, such as names or addresses, that can be used to identify you or your baby. The NBS Program follows all federal and state privacy and research laws.

If you want the card destroyed after the newborn screening is done, that is your right.

To learn more about the storage and use of leftover blood spots, or to find out how to get your baby’s blood spot collection card destroyed, visit: https://bit.ly/NBSResearch

For more information about newborn screening, ask your health care provider or visit: www.cdph.ca.gov/NBS
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