

Before You Opt Out

What You Need to Know About Newborn Screening



What is Newborn Screening?

Newborn blood spot screening tests for rare but serious health conditions using a few drops of blood from your baby's heel, taken within 24–36 hours after birth. Early detection of genetic, metabolic, hormonal, and blood disorders allows for timely treatment to prevent lasting harm.



Importance of Early Detection

Early screening detects rare but serious conditions before symptoms appear, allowing timely treatment that can prevent disability or death. Most affected babies show no signs at birth and often have no family history. Based on 2023 Birth Information data, in Tennessee, about 1 in 300 infants had a screened condition, 1 in 500 had hearing loss, and 1 in 1,900 had congenital heart disease.

Frequently Asked Questions



These diseases are so rare—why screen for them?

While each is rare, together they affect 1 in 300–500 babies. Early detection can prevent severe harm or death.

No one in our family has these conditions—why would our baby?

Most affected babies have no family history. These inherited disorders can appear even when parents show no symptoms.

What conditions are screened on the newborn screening panel?

Tennessee screens for 65+ conditions affecting:

- blood cells
- brain development
- how the body breaks down nutrients from food
- lungs and breathing
- hormones
- how the body fights infections

What happens to the blood after testing?

Extra blood is stored at the Department of Health Laboratory for one year in case the blood is requested by you or the baby's doctor in the future. The lab also uses it to do quality checks, to make sure the machines are working right, or to evaluate new tests to help more babies in the future. Stored blood used for these reasons will have personal information removed before use.



Scan the QR code for details on each disorder.



For More Information visit the State of Tennessee Newborn Screening Website: www.tn.gov/newbornscreening OR scan the QR code on the right.

