



Newborn
Hearing
Screening
Programme

Referral to audiology

YOUR BABY'S REFERRAL TO AUDIOLOGY – INFORMATION FOR THOSE WITH PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

Your baby has been referred to the audiology clinic for a further hearing test. This leaflet explains why this test is needed and what is involved.

An audiology clinic is usually part of the hospital and has special equipment which can test your baby's hearing. An audiologist is someone who specialises in hearing. The tests carried out at the audiology clinic will give you and the audiologist better information about your baby's hearing. Finding hearing loss (in one or both ears) early is important for your baby's development and means that you and your baby will get the right advice and support as soon as possible.

Why does my baby need further tests?

If the screening tests do not show clear responses from one or both ears this does not necessarily mean that your baby has a hearing loss. Many babies may need to have further tests. Some common reasons for having further tests include:

- Baby was unsettled at the time of the test;
- There was background noise at the time of the test;
- Fluid or a temporary blockage in the ear

What is the likelihood of my baby having a hearing loss?

Most babies tested at the audiology clinic will be found to have no hearing loss. However, there is the possibility that your baby may have a hearing loss.

Approximately one to two babies in every 1,000 are born with a permanent hearing loss in one or both ears. This number increases to approximately 1 in every 100 for babies who have spent at least 48 hours in a neonatal intensive care or special care baby unit.

My baby seems to be responding to sound. Do I need to take my baby for further tests?

Yes, it is important that you attend the appointment. This is because babies who have a hearing loss may react to some sounds. If your baby does have a hearing loss, it is important for your baby's development to find out as soon as possible.

What tests take place at an audiology clinic?

A diagnostic hearing test (namely, an Auditory Brainstem Response (ABR) test) will be performed and the audiologist will explain this to you. The appointment will usually take about one to two hours. This will include time to settle your baby. The test is painless and will not be uncomfortable for your baby and you will be able to stay with your baby while the test is done.

When will I receive the results?

Your audiologist will explain when the results of the test will be available and what the results mean. If you have any concerns about the results, or you have any questions, contact the audiology clinic. You can find the contact details at the end of this leaflet.

What happens if the tests show clear responses?

If the diagnostic test shows a clear response from both of your baby's ears, this means that your baby is unlikely to have a hearing loss. Your baby's Personal Child Health Record (PCHR or 'red book') contains a 'checklist' which gives advice about the sounds your baby should react to and the types of sounds that they should make as they grow older. If you have any concerns regarding your baby's hearing, **at any age**, you should discuss them with your health visitor or GP. This is important as hearing loss can occur at any age.

What if the tests still do not record a clear response from one or both of my baby's ears?

If this happens, your audiologist will explain what the results mean. Further diagnostic tests may be required. There are different types and levels of hearing loss. The results of the tests done at the audiology clinic will help the audiologist ensure that you and your baby get the right support and information as soon as possible.

Where can I get further information?

If you would like more information about your baby's hearing test contact the audiology clinic in your Health and Social Care Trust, or your health visitor or your GP. You can also contact the National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) freephone helpline on 0808 800 8880 (voice and text) or visit their website: <https://www.ndcs.org.uk/>

Contact details for your local audiology department are:

- **Northern Health and Social Care Trust**
Tel 028 25 635483 or email: audiology@northerntrust.hscni.net
- **Southern Health and Social Care Trust**
Tel 028 37 560872 or Text (only) 07841101452
- **South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust**
Tel 028 90 561307 or email: Audiology.uhd@setrust.hscni.net
- **Western Health and Social Care Trust**
Tel 028 82 833185 or
email: audiology.department@westerntrust.hscni.net
- **Belfast Health and Social Care Trust**
Tel 028 96 151070 or Text (only) 07385 386 987

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