

Central West Infant Hearing Program

Serving families living in Halton, Peel, Waterloo,
Guelph/Wellington, Dufferin

Newborn Hearing Screening During COVID-19

Information for Parents

Like many services, newborn hearing screening by the Infant Hearing Program has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Can I still get my baby's hearing screened?

Once it is safe to do so, hearing services for infants will start again and will follow provincial and local health and safety guidelines.

Hearing screening needs to take place before your baby is 8 weeks old.

If a baby is older than 8 weeks of age and community hearing screening clinics have not re-opened, physical newborn hearing screening is no longer possible.

If your baby has a specific risk factor for hearing loss that was identified at birth, or if he or she had the first step in screening and additional screening was recommended, you will be contacted about your baby's hearing screening.

Newborn Screening Ontario (NSO) risk factor blood spot screening continued throughout the pandemic for most babies born on or after March 26, 2020. This routine blood spot sample

is checked for cytomegalovirus (cCMV) and some genetic factors that identify a higher risk for permanent hearing loss. If your baby's blood spot screen is positive for a risk factor, you will be contacted by NSO directly.

What if my baby did not have a hearing screening at birth?

If your baby's hearing was not screened at birth and screening is no longer possible because of your baby's age, the best thing you can do is to watch how your baby's hearing, speech and language skills are developing.

Your baby's hearing and communication skills

The main reason your baby's hearing is screened at birth is because hearing is necessary to learn how to talk. Finding out early if your baby has a hearing loss means that support can be provided as soon as possible to reduce any communication delays.

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Communication checklists

The following checklists will help you understand your child's hearing and communication development and know when to ask for help.

Speech, Language and Hearing Milestones:

Prevent, Protect, Act (SAC Speech-Language and Audiology Canada) bit.ly/2AErNSG

Look What I Can Do! A Guide to Communication Development

The First Five Years (ErinoakKids) bit.ly/HearingPDF

The Ontario Infant Hearing Program

website provides information about hearing milestones:

www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/english/earlychildhood

Check out the Preschool Speech and Language Program resources in your area:

- KidsAbility (Waterloo)
www.kidsability.ca/speech-language
- ErinoakKids (Halton-Peel)
www.erinoakkids.ca/Communication-CheckUp
- WeeTalk (Wellington-Dufferin)
www.wdgpulichealth.ca/your-kids/wee-talk-speech-and-language

What should I do if I am concerned about my child's hearing?

If you notice that your child is not developing hearing, speech and language skills, talk to your child's doctor. Remind him or her that your child's hearing was not screened at birth because of the COVID-19 pandemic. If your child's hearing should be tested, contact an audiologist who is used to seeing children. Audiologists are registered health care professionals and some see children regularly. You can search for an audiologist who sees children 0-5 years in your area on the College of Audiologists and Speech Language Pathologists of Ontario (CASLPO)

www.publicregister.caslpo.com

How do I know if an audiologist has experience with young children?

There are certain ways audiologists test young children to gather accurate information in a child-friendly way. Some audiologists test all ages, but others may only see older children and adults.

Here are some questions to ask:

- What age of children do you typically see?
- How many children under the age of five do you typically see in a month?
- Is there a fee for the hearing test? (Note: In some cases, there will be a fee.)

For more information about newborn hearing screening, read the "Can Your Baby Hear?" Fact Sheet that you received when your baby was discharged from the hospital.

ERINOAKKIDS
Centre for Treatment and Development

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For more information call 905-855-2690
(toll free 1-877-374-6625) and press 3