



Newborn Health & Screening at the Hospital: What can parents expect?

Along with exams and vital signs, we offer a number of things in the hospital to protect your baby and help your baby get a healthy start in life.

What medications or vaccines are given to babies in the hospital?

- **Vitamin K:** This injection is given to babies in their leg in the birthing room during the first hours of life. It prevents babies from bleeding problems.
- **Antibiotic Eye Ointment:** We place antibiotic ointment in a baby's eyes to prevent eye infections from bacteria or germs during the birthing process.
- **Hepatitis B:** We offer the Hepatitis B vaccine before leaving the hospital. Hepatitis B is a liver infection that is spread through body fluids. This vaccine is the first of many recommended vaccines to keep your baby and our community healthy.

What tests are done for babies in the hospital?

- **Newborn Screen:** At 24 hours of life, we take a few drops of blood from your baby's heel and send it to the MN Department of Health. The sample is tested for a number of rare, but potentially serious diseases. Knowing about any of these potential problems right away can help to keep your baby healthy. The results are ready by your baby's 2 week check-up in the clinic.
- **Hearing Screen:** We do a hearing screen on all babies using special headphones. If your baby does not "pass" the screen, we will refer you for another hearing test. This test helps us find any hearing problems early in life.
- **Cardiac Screen:** The nurses will check the oxygen level in your baby's arms and legs. This helps us know their heart is working well. This test does not hurt.
- **Bilirubin Screen:** We check all babies' bilirubin level using a special light on their forehead at 24 hours of life. If this level is high, we check a blood sample from their heel. All people, including newborns, make bilirubin as we break down red blood cells. This bilirubin leaves our bodies through our liver, bowel movements, urine and by exposure to sunshine. Babies often make more bilirubin than their body can process and their bilirubin level in their blood rises. High bilirubin levels can make skin look yellow or "jaundiced." If the level is too high, it can be dangerous for the baby. We often need to check the bilirubin level more than once during the hospital stay and the first week of life. The best way for a baby's bilirubin to come down is feeding well, lots of wet and dirty diapers and, if needed, using special lights to lower the bilirubin.
- **Cord Blood:** After cutting the cord, we collect a sample of the baby's blood from the placenta and cord. From this sample, we can learn the baby's blood type if we need to.
- **Cord segment testing:** We save a piece of every umbilical cord in the lab for a week or so. If your baby has any health concerns in those first days or week of life, we can run additional tests for exposures to harmful substances during pregnancy on the cord sample.