

Understanding the Newborn Bloodspot Screening Test: What Parents Need to Know



Highlights

The newborn bloodspot test screens for rare disorders that are more treatable if detected early.

The test is performed within the first 48 to 72 hours after birth.

The test is free and requires parental consent.

The test involves pricking your baby's heel to collect blood on a special filter paper.

Most babies will have normal results, and parents will only be contacted if there are concerns.

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Overview of the newborn bloodspot screening test

The newborn bloodspot screening test is a quick procedure to detect several rare disorders that are easier to treat if found early. It is done within 48 to 72 hours of birth and is commonly known as the "heel prick" test.

It is offered to all parents and is voluntary.

Parental consent is required.

Most babies tested will have normal results.

Parents will be contacted only if concerns arise.

Procedure for the test

If parents agree, a nurse or midwife will prick the baby's heel using a thin needle and collect a few drops of blood on a special filter paper.

The heel prick is brief but may be uncomfortable.

Holding or breastfeeding the baby can reduce the discomfort.

The blood sample is sent to a laboratory for testing.

Conditions being screened for

The newborn bloodspot screening test checks for several rare but serious conditions. Early detection helps ensure timely intervention and can prevent severe health issues or death.

Understanding the results

Most babies will have normal results.

Parents will be contacted if there are concerns with the test results.

If the first test is unclear, a second test may be needed, which typically also returns normal results.

If a positive result is returned, further tests will confirm the diagnosis, and treatment will begin promptly.

What is being screened for?

Newborn bloodspot screening helps to identify a range of conditions, including

these:

Sample storage and usage

The collected samples are securely stored for quality control.

Samples are kept in a locked location until the child reaches 18 years old.

In some cases, the sample card can be returned to the parents after two years.

Once identifying information is removed, the samples may be used for research or further testing at the parent's request.

After a specific period, the samples are destroyed.

Parental consent for newborn screening

Newborn screening is entirely voluntary.

Newborn screening tests are free of charge.

Parents have the option to decide whether they want the test performed.

Doctors will explain the benefits and risks, enabling parents to make an informed decision.

Tools and Support

Healthcare Providers: Consult your primary healthcare provider for information on the newborn bloodspot screening test and any follow-up actions needed.

Local Health Clinics and Hospitals: For additional resources or specialists, contact your local clinic or hospital.

Parent Support Groups: Connect with groups for emotional support and practical advice if your baby's screening result is concerning.

Genetic Counseling: If a condition is detected, genetic counseling can help you understand the diagnosis and implications for future pregnancies.

Online Resources: Health organizations provide online resources to explain the screened conditions in more detail.

Follow-up Testing: If results suggest a health concern, follow-up tests are necessary, and your healthcare provider will guide you through the process.

Mental Health Support: If needed, mental health professionals can provide support for coping with emotional distress after receiving test results.