

# Eastern Ontario Infant Hearing Program

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The Infant Hearing Program is an initiative of the Government of Ontario's Ministry of Children and Youth Services. Its objective is to identify infants who are deaf or at risk of developing hearing loss in early childhood and provide related support and communication development services to families.

Pinecrest-Queensway Community Health Centre coordinates services for Eastern Ontario which includes the city of Ottawa, Renfrew County, and the counties of Prescott-Russell and Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry. Program services are provided in partnership with local hospitals, midwives and CHEO Audiology.

## CAN YOUR BABY HEAR?

Even before a baby is born, he or she can hear sounds from the world outside the womb. From the moment of birth, a baby begins to use sounds, combined with body movement and facial expressions to make sense of the world. When babies hear people talking, they learn to put meaning to these sounds and they begin to learn language and how to communicate. But some babies are born deaf or hard of hearing. It is a very small number (about 4 in 1,000 Ontario babies). This makes it difficult for these babies to make sense of their world and learn language. Help is available for those babies, so it is very important to find them as early as possible. That is why the Government of Ontario has implemented the Infant Hearing Program to screen every newborn baby for a hearing loss.

## HOW WILL YOU KNOW IF YOUR BABY CAN HEAR?

In Ontario, all newborn babies can have their hearing screened. There is no charge for the screening, and it is a simple, fast, reliable process that does not hurt the baby in any way.

## HOW CAN YOU GET YOUR BABY'S HEARING SCREENED?

Babies normally receive the newborn hearing screening shortly after birth.

- If your baby is born in an Ontario hospital, the newborn hearing screening will be done prior to discharge from hospital.
- If your baby is born with the help of a midwife, the newborn hearing screening will be done by your midwife at the 10 day office visit.
- If your baby spends an extended amount of time in an Ontario hospital's special care nursery, the screening will be done there prior to discharge.

If your baby was not screened in hospital or by your midwife, you can contact the Eastern Ontario Infant Hearing Program for an appointment to have the screening done at a local community screening clinics in your area. **Please call (613) 688-3979 extension 453 or toll-free 1-866-HEAR-IHP (1-866-432-7447).** Community clinics are offered in locations across Ottawa, in Casselman, Cornwall and Hawkesbury as well as Arnprior and Pembroke.

## HOW IS A BABY'S HEARING SCREENED?

There are two ways to screen a baby's hearing. From the baby's point of view, they are both very simple. While the baby is quiet or sleeping, a small earphone is placed in the baby's ear. Soft sounds are played through the earphone. The baby's ear responds to the sounds, and the screening machine automatically measures and interprets the ear's response. It takes only a few minutes, and you will be given the results right away. The results will tell you either that your baby has passed the screening or that he or she should have a second screening that works in a similar way but measures the brain's response to the sounds.

If your baby is referred for a second screen or test, try not to worry. Most babies who do not pass the first screening are found to have normal hearing. There are many reasons why a baby may not pass the first screening other than hearing loss. For example, your baby might have a slight cold or may have been moving too much during the screening. However, it is very important that you have the second screening, or a hearing test, just to make sure.

If your baby passes the screening, it means that his hearing is normal at the time of screening. It is important to continue to pay attention to your baby's hearing and to help speech and language skills develop.

## WHY EARLY SCREENING IS IMPORTANT

It's important to find out if your baby has hearing loss. Undetected hearing loss can cause delays in your baby's language development which can lead to behavioural and emotional problems and, later on, to problems in school. The sooner hearing loss is identified, the better. There are many services available to help children with hearing loss. Finding out early means that they can get the help they need right away, and this gives them the same chance to develop language skills as hearing children.

## WHAT IF MY BABY DOES HAVE A PERMANENT HEARING LOSS?

If your baby is identified with a permanent hearing loss, the Eastern Ontario Infant Hearing Program will provide audiology assessment, assistive technology and communication development services. A Family Support Worker is also available to help support your family by answering questions, providing information and counseling, and connecting you to appropriate community services.

To learn more about baby's hearing -

[http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/topics/earlychildhood/hearing/brochure\\_hear.aspx](http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/topics/earlychildhood/hearing/brochure_hear.aspx)

To learn more about how babies learn language -

<http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/topics/earlychildhood/speechlanguage/index.aspx>

## WHAT IF MY BABY PASSED THE HEARING SCREENINGS AT BIRTH BUT I NOW HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT WHETHER HE CAN HEAR?

If hearing concerns (except for ear infections) develop for a child younger than 2 years of age, the child can be referred back to the Eastern Ontario Infant Hearing Program for re-assessment. A parent or legal guardian can call the program at (613) 688-3979 or toll-free 1-866-432-7447 (1-866-HEAR-IHP) for follow up.

If hearing concerns develop for a child over 2 years of age, please see the child's physician for follow up.

If hearing concerns are regarding ear infections regardless of child's age, please see the child's physician for follow up.