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Critical Congenital Heart Disease (CCHD) Screening

A bedside test will soon be available to newborns in Ontario in order to identify babies with critical congenital heart disease (CCHD). Although most newborns do not have a heart problem, early identification and treatment is vital in helping those who do.

What is CCHD?

Congenital Heart Disease is a condition that occurs when a baby's heart or major blood vessels have not formed properly. "Critical" congenital heart disease (CCHD) often requires surgery or intervention in the first year of life.

Why screen for CCHD?

Some babies with CCHD are not identified by prenatal ultrasound or by physical examination after birth, and can appear to be healthy (no symptoms). These babies are at risk for having serious complications within the first few days or weeks of life and require emergency care.

How do you screen for CCHD?

CCHD screening is a **safe, quick and painless** test that can detect low oxygen levels, a common sign of CCHD. The monitor that is used is placed like a Band-Aid or sticker on your baby. The test is done at 24 to 48 hours after birth and takes only a few minutes to complete. The results are available immediately.

Can CCHD be missed with screening?

CCHD screening can identify babies with low oxygen levels, which can be a sign of CCHD, but it may not detect all heart problems.

What if my baby has a positive screen result?

A positive screen result does **not** mean that your baby has CCHD, but that further evaluation is needed to determine the cause of low oxygen levels. Immediate examination by a physician is important to ensure the best health outcomes for your baby.


If your health care providers are concerned about your baby's screening results, they will order more tests, such as an ultrasound of the heart (echocardiogram). Once identified, babies with CCHD can be seen by cardiologists and receive specialized care and treatment helping them to grow and develop normally.

If you have any concerns about your baby's health, please discuss them with your baby's health care provider.

A healthier start leads to a healthier life

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