

# Universal Newborn Hearing Screening



## What is Universal Newborn Hearing Screening?

This is a screening process for all newborns that helps to detect a possible hearing loss within the first few months of a baby's life.

## Why should my baby's hearing be tested?

About 4 in 1,000 babies in Singapore have significant hearing impairment at birth. The earlier a hearing loss is detected, the better it is to maximize a baby's developmental potential. Since we learn to speak by listening,

babies who are not able to hear well will have difficulty understanding words and learning to talk.

## **When and how will this hearing screening be done?**

Newborn hearing screening is performed within the first few days after birth, usually prior to discharge from hospital. It is performed by trained staff and does not hurt the baby. It takes at least 30 minutes to perform as it requires a baby to be resting quietly.

There are two different types of automated screening tests. Your baby may have one or both of these tests. In each test, your baby will listen to a series of soft sounds through a tiny earphone. The computer will measure your baby's response to the sound. Occasionally, screening cannot be completed before discharge and your baby may need an outpatient follow-up screening test.

## **What does it mean if my baby does not pass the hearing screening?**

It means that your baby should have the hearing screen repeated either before your baby is discharged or at outpatient. This does not mean that your baby has hearing impairment.

Some reasons a baby may need to repeat the hearing screening test include:

- Fluid in the ear
- Baby was moving a lot
- Baby has a hearing loss

Testing is the only way to know if a baby has a hearing loss and the earlier we can detect hearing loss, the better it is for a baby.

If your baby does not pass the repeat screening test, a referral will then be made to the Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) specialist.

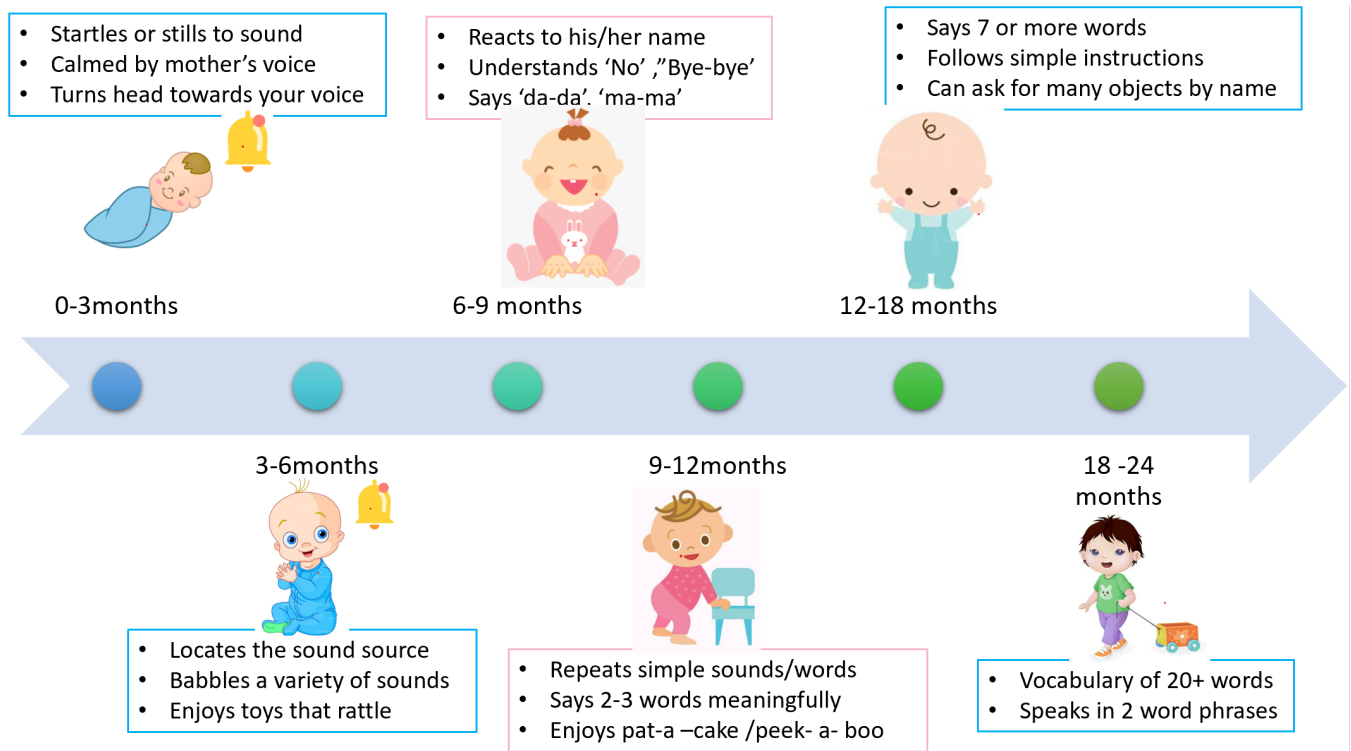
## **What will the ENT specialist do?**

The ENT specialist together with the Audiologist (hearing specialist) will perform detailed hearing tests to get a complete picture of your child's hearing ability.

If they find a problem, there are many things that can be done to help a baby maximize on hearing, speech and language development.

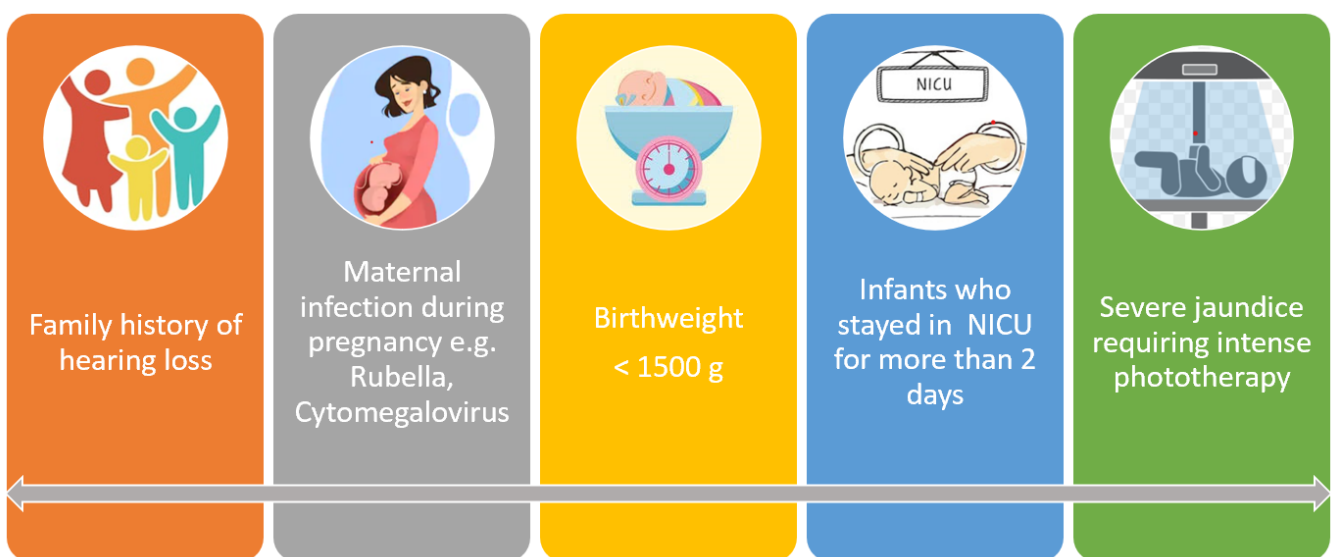
## **Keep in Mind!**

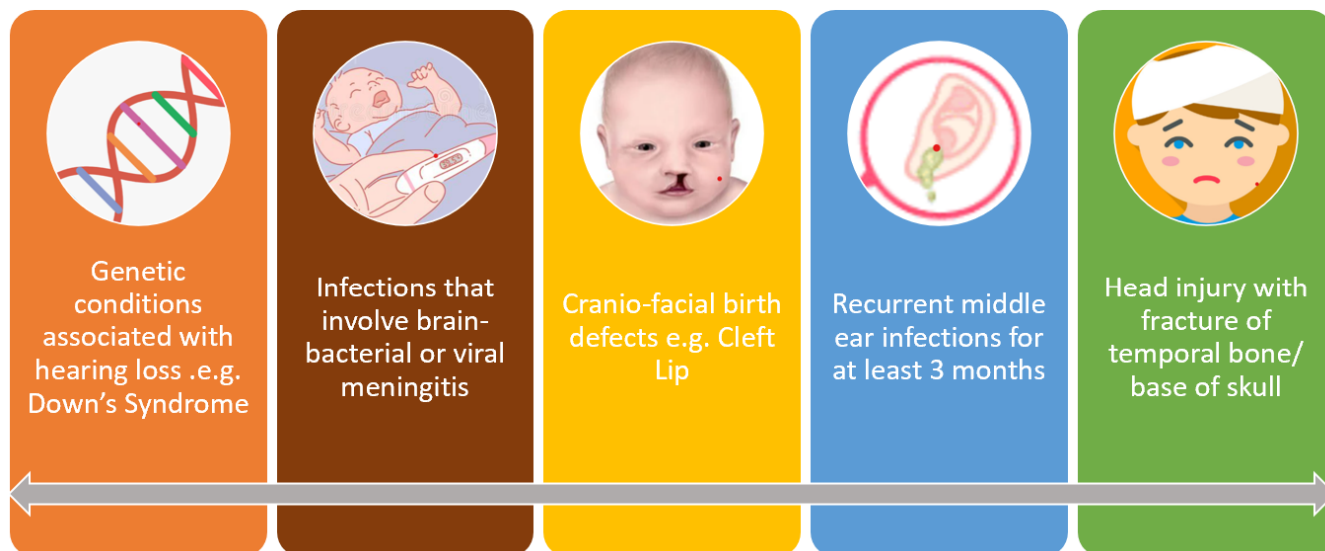
Some babies may have normal hearing at birth. However, hearing impairment may develop gradually during infancy or childhood due to several reasons like recurrent ear infections or genetic factors. Hence, even if your baby has passed the newborn hearing screening tests, it is important to be vigilant and monitor your baby's hearing and language ability. You can track these milestones in your baby's health booklet and in the chart below.



## Infants vulnerable for hearing impairment

All newborns are screened for hearing impairment after birth under the Universal Newborn Hearing Screening Program. Some are identified to be more vulnerable for hearing impairment if they belong to any one of the categories below:





## What does it mean if my baby is in the 'vulnerable' category?

It means that your baby is at a higher chance for developing hearing impairment that may be present at birth, shortly after birth or may develop later in childhood. It also means that your baby will be screened using 2 screening tools before discharge. If your baby does not pass the newborn hearing screening tests, referral to the ENT will be made for diagnostic tests as early as possible.

## Why does my baby need to be followed up?

Regular outpatient appointments will be scheduled with the Pediatrician to monitor your baby's hearing, speech, and language development, especially in the first 3 years of life. Any concern about your baby's hearing ability or speech should be brought to the attention of the doctor during these clinic visits. For some babies, another hearing evaluation will be scheduled to be done by the ENT specialist during infancy. It is very important for your child to be reviewed regularly to enable early detection of delayed onset or progressive hearing loss.

## What will happen during the ENT visits?

The ENT doctor will check your baby's ears and an Audiologist (hearing specialist) will conduct comprehensive hearing tests for your baby.

## **What happens if my baby is detected to have hearing loss on follow-up?**

If hearing loss is detected, he/she may need further evaluation to identify the cause, type and severity of hearing loss. Early interventions to optimize speech and language development will also be instituted without delay.

## **What are the early interventions available for a child with hearing loss?**

Providing children and families the earliest possible start to intervention is important. Interventions for children may include fitting of hearing aids, cochlear implant surgery and auditory-verbal therapy for the development of speech and language. Children with hearing loss will be taught to listen with their hearing devices. Family members will be taught several strategies to support the child's language growth and provide a language rich environment through daily routines at home. Working together we can help a child achieve the maximum potential in academics and social life.

## **Appointment Information**

### **Universal Newborn Hearing Screening**

Ward 53 Central (next to room 22)

Block 5, Level 3, Singapore General Hospital

### **ENT Centre, Specialist Outpatient Clinics**

Block 3, Basement 1, Singapore General Hospital

### **SGH Baby & Child Clinic**

Obstetrics & Gynecology Centre

Block 5, level 1, Singapore General Hospital

To re-schedule, call SGH Central Appointment Desk: 6321 4377 during office hours (Mon - Fri: 8am - 5pm)

Please bring along your baby's health booklet and birth certificate on the day of appointment