Frequently Asked Questions

What is Virginia's Newborn Screening Services?

The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) and the Division of Consolidated Laboratory Services (DCLS) work together to find babies that have rare, but serious disorders. These disorders can be treated and problems prevented if they are found early in life. Because babies with these disorders look healthy at birth, screening identifies them before the disorder causes the baby to become sick. Healthcare providers are alerted if there is a possible problem with a baby's test results. DCLS can perform repeat tests on infants up to 6 months of age.

How is my baby tested?

Your baby's heel will be pricked to get a few drops of blood. This blood will then be placed on special paper, dried, and sent to DCLS for testing

When is the best time to test my baby?

For the results to be reliable, newborn screening should be done after the baby is 24 hours of age. If your baby is not born in a hospital, the midwife or doctor taking care of your baby should make sure that the screening tests are done.

What disorders are screened in Virginia?

Virginia now screens babies for the 28 dried blood-spot disorders that are recommended by the March of Dimes and the American Academy of Pediatrics. To see this list click here.

Is my permission required for screening?

Newborn screening is so important to the health of babies that it is required by state law. Parents may refuse screening only if the tests conflict with their religious practices.

How much will these tests cost?

DCLS charges the hospital a fee ($101.20) for doing the screening tests on your baby's blood sample. In addition, the doctor, clinic or hospital may charge a small fee to do the heel prick.

How will I be informed of the results?

Your hospital and doctor or clinic will be sent a copy of all tests results. You are encouraged to ask your healthcare provider about the results when you bring your baby to the doctor or clinic for his/her well baby checkup.

Why would my baby need to be retested?

Sometimes a baby will need to have another dried blood-spot sample done. This does not mean that there is something wrong with your baby. But, if you are asked to have your baby retested, it is very important for you to act quickly.

What if my baby's test indicates a problem?

Remember that these are screening tests. They do not diagnose these disorders. If your baby's screening indicates a possible problem, your doctor or healthcare provider will notify you and additional diagnostic testing may be required.

If my baby has one of these disorders, can it be cured?

There are no cures for these disorders. However, with early diagnosis and treatment it is possible for your baby to grow and develop normally.

How does a baby get one of these disorders?

Usually a baby inherits a changed gene from both parents.

Will my other children have the disorder?

A trained professional or genetic counselor can study your family's history and explain the chance of this happening again. Some family testing may also be necessary.

What part can I play to make sure all of this works?

Make sure that the hospital, your doctor, or clinic can contact you. Do not leave the hospital without leaving an address and a phone number of where you can be reached

Are there any other screening tests my baby will have before leaving the hospital?

In addition to the 28 dried blood-spot screening disorders for which newborn screening is mandated in Virginia, there are other screenings you baby will have. Your baby will be screened for Critical Congenital Heart Disease (CCHD) and will have a hearing screening. If you are interested in additional testing for other disorders not on the Virginia Newborn Screening Panel, you should discuss this with your our baby's healthcare provider.