



## Frequently Asked Questions about Newborn Screening

### **Why is the newborn screening test done?**

By law, all Rhode Island newborns are tested for several rare but serious conditions. If not treated, these conditions can cause mental retardation, slow growth, or death (See Rhode Island law [23-13-13](#) and [23-13-14](#)).

### **Who should be tested?**

Every baby born in Rhode Island should have this test.

### **When should it be done?**

The test should be done between 24-48 hours after birth, or just before your baby is discharged from the hospital.

### **How is the test done?**

A few drops of blood are taken from your baby's heel.

### **What tests are performed on my baby's blood?**

The blood tests check for metabolic (how the body digests food), endocrine (how the body controls many functions), and hemoglobin (blood) conditions. A full list of conditions is available at [www.health.ri.gov/newbornscreening/blood/](http://www.health.ri.gov/newbornscreening/blood/)

### **What happens with the test results?**

Your baby's birth hospital sends your baby's blood sample to the New England Newborn Screening Laboratory. Your baby's doctor will call you if the test results are not normal. This does not necessarily mean that your baby has a condition. The doctor will talk to you about next steps.

### **What does it mean if my doctor calls me for a repeat testing?**

Sometimes, a baby needs to be tested again. This does not necessarily mean that your baby has a medical condition. Your baby's doctor or the Rhode Island Newborn Screening Program will contact you if your baby needs more testing. It is important to get this testing done right away. Retesting may need to be done if:

- The blood sample was taken before your baby was 24 hours old.
- There was a problem with the way the blood sample was taken.
- The first test showed a possible medical condition.

### **How are these conditions treated?**

Each condition is different. Treatment may include a special diet, hormones, and/or medicine.

### **Can I say no to the test?**

The law says that parents may refuse the test for religious reasons. You will need to sign a refusal form if you refuse to have your baby tested.

### **What if I have more questions?**

Ask your baby's doctor or contact the Rhode Island Newborn Screening Program by calling the HEALTH Information Line at 401-222-5960 / RI Relay 711.