

# Pulse Oximetry Screening for Critical Congenital Heart Disease (CCHD)

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## What is congenital heart disease (CHD)?

CHD is a problem in the structure of the heart or its major blood vessels. It is the most common birth defect.

Some forms of CHD are very serious (critical). These can cause a baby to become sick soon after birth.

## How do you check for CHD?

Before your baby goes home, we will check for:

- a sound in the baby's heart (called a heart murmur)
- abnormal heart rate, breathing or blood pressure.

We will also do a **pulse oximetry test** to check for low oxygen levels.

Babies with critical CHD don't always have these symptoms right after birth. But if your baby has any of these symptoms, we will need to do more tests.

## What is pulse oximetry?

Pulse oximetry [ox-EH-mah-tree] is a simple, painless test that measures how much oxygen is in the blood. It is sometimes called a "pulse ox."

We will place a sticky strip, like a Band-Aid, on your baby's hand or foot. A probe (small red light) on the strip measures your baby's oxygen level.

The probe will only be on your baby's skin for a few minutes. **It will not hurt your baby.** At most, it may cause mild irritation to the skin.

## Why should my baby have pulse oximetry?

Low oxygen can be a sign of serious CHD. If your baby has CHD, this test may tell us *before* your baby becomes unwell.

Low oxygen may also occur if:

- your baby's lungs and heart are adjusting after birth
- your baby has a lung problem.

If your baby has low oxygen, we will do more tests to find out if your baby's heart is normal.

## **What is a normal pulse-ox result?**

A normal reading is **95 to 100 percent, with a difference of less than 3 points between the hand and the foot.**

It is possible for a baby with serious CHD to have a normal reading. Your baby should have regular doctor visits. If your doctor suspects a heart problem, he or she will advise you.

## **What happens if my baby has low oxygen?**

If the pulse-ox reading is low, we may consult with another doctor, or we may order more tests.

The most common test is called an echocardiogram, or “echo.” This is an ultrasound of the heart. The echo test looks at the structure of the heart and its blood flow. This test is painless and won’t harm your baby.

## **When will we get the results?**

We will review the test results with your baby’s doctor before your baby leaves the hospital. If there are any concerns, we will let you know.

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

If you have questions about CHD or pulse oximetry, talk to the doctor or nurse caring for your baby.