

Hearing Assessments for Babies Under Four Months of Age

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This information leaflet describes what will happen when you bring your baby to clinic for a hearing assessment. Please read this leaflet carefully as it will help you to prepare your baby for their hearing assessment.

Preparing for your visit

To assess your baby's hearing, we need your baby to be very still and quiet. Ideally, they will be asleep. If your baby is not still and quiet we may not be able to complete the hearing assessment and you may need to come back on another day.

What will happen when we come to clinic?

When you arrive at clinic our receptionist will book your baby in. They will ask you to confirm one or two details so that we can ensure that your baby's information is up to date. The receptionist will then direct you to the waiting area. A member of the Audiology team will collect you from the waiting room to assess your baby's hearing.

What will happen during the assessment?

Once comfortable in the assessment room, the Audiologist will ask a number of questions relating to your baby's hearing. The Audiologist will then examine your baby's ears using an otoscope (a piece of equipment used to examine the outer ear and eardrum). This allows us to check whether there are any problems with the outer ear. This may include the presence of excess ear wax or an ear infection.

The Audiologist will assess your baby's hearing. The specific tests we use to assess your baby's hearing will be decided when we meet you. This decision will be based on your baby's age, development and how settled they are. Most commonly, we will use a test called the Auditory Brainstem Response (ABR). We will put some small sticky sensors on your baby's head and will play your baby some sounds via a small earphone. The sensors allow us to detect the small nerve signal that carries information from the ear to the brain. This way we can measure exactly what levels of sound they can hear.

Sometimes, if we suspect that there is a problem with the middle part of the ear, we will need to perform another test called Tympanometry. To do this, the Audiologist will place a small rubber ear tip in the entrance to the ear. Your baby will feel a slight pressure in the ear while the Tympanometer makes its measurements. Although we are putting a slight pressure in the ear this does not feel uncomfortable for your baby.

When do I find out the results of the assessment?

The Audiologist will explain the results of the assessment at the end of the appointment. You will also receive a copy of the letter that goes to the person who referred your baby to see us which will contain the result of the assessment

What happens next?

This depends entirely on the results of the assessment. If everything is satisfactory your baby will be discharged from clinic. If we identify a problem or are not able to complete the assessment we may need to see your baby again. In some cases we may need to refer your baby to an Ear, Nose and Throat doctor. Whatever we do, the Audiologist will explain fully why it is necessary and what the benefit will be.

Data Protection

Any personal information is kept confidential. There may be occasions where your information needs to be shared with other care professionals to ensure you receive the best care possible.

In order to assist us to improve the services available, your information may be used for clinical audit, research, teaching and anonymised for National NHS Reviews and Statistics.

Further information is available via Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust website or by contacting the Data Protection Officer by telephone on 0191 445 8418 or by email ghnt.ig.team@nhs.net.

This leaflet can be made available in other languages and formats upon request

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