What if my baby doesn’t have a hearing loss?

If the tests show your baby does not have a hearing loss, it’s still important to keep an eye on your baby’s hearing.

Some babies may have risk factors for developing hearing loss as they get older. Your Audiologist will let you know if this is the case for your baby and they will arrange for another hearing test for your baby sometime before their first birthday if needed.

Even though only a small number of babies with risk factors develop a hearing loss, it is still important for your baby to have the extra hearing tests if recommended.

Picking up a hearing loss at an early age provides the best opportunity to assist your baby’s speech & language development, and future learning.

Queensland Hearing Loss Family Support Service (QHLFSS)

The Queensland Hearing Loss Family Support Service (QHLFSS) offers support to families of babies diagnosed with permanent hearing loss. If your baby is found to have a permanent hearing loss, a Family Support Facilitator will make contact with you, and will be available to work with you and your family over an extended time.

The service is free to all families. If you do not hear from the QHLFSS, you can contact them on 1800 352 075.

Remember that a child’s hearing can be tested at any age. If you have concerns about your baby’s hearing, contact your doctor to ask for a referral to an Audiologist to have your baby’s hearing tested.

Audiology Appointment

Date & Time: ..............................................................
Audiology Service: ..........................................................
......................................................................................
Address: ...........................................................................
Telephone Number: ...........................................................

If you do not receive an audiology appointment within one week of your baby’s second hearing screen, please contact the Audiology service you will be going to, or the QHLFSS on 1800 352 075.

What if we can’t make the appointment?

If you cannot attend your appointment, notify your Audiologist as soon as you can before the appointment to cancel and to reschedule.

Testing of babies is best done while they are very young (as they sleep better). The delaying of appointments should be avoided where possible.

How much will the appointment cost?

Your hearing screener will provide details of the Audiology services available in your area.

Public Audiology services perform hearing testing for free for medicare eligible babies. This is available to all babies, regardless of whether they were born in a public or private hospital.

If you choose to go to a private Audiologist, you will need to be aware that costs are involved for testing and you will need to make contact with the service to discuss.

Your Baby’s Audiology Hearing Test

Your baby has been referred to an Audiologist for further hearing tests.

This brochure explains why your baby has been referred and what will be involved.
Why has my baby been referred to an Audiologist?
Your baby had a ‘refer’ result on their two hearing screens. This means the screening was unable to rule out a hearing loss, and your baby needs further hearing testing by an Audiologist.

There can be a number of reasons for a baby to have a ‘refer’ result on hearing screening. Your baby may have:
- a permanent hearing loss;
- a temporary hearing loss, due to fluid or a temporary blockage in their ear after birth, that may have affected their hearing at the time of the hearing screen;
- been unsettled during both hearing screens, or
- experienced background noise during the screens.

What is an Audiologist?
An Audiologist is a hearing specialist with the skills and equipment to perform detailed hearing tests (diagnostic hearing tests).

What are diagnostic hearing tests?
Diagnostic hearing tests find out whether a baby has normal hearing or a hearing loss. If a baby has a hearing loss, diagnostic testing will show:
- whether it is temporary or permanent
- the level or degree of the hearing loss (ranging from mild to total hearing loss)
- whether the hearing loss is in one or both ears.

It often takes more than one appointment to get all the information about your baby’s hearing.

What will happen during the tests?
Your Audiologist will do a number of different tests. Each test checks a different part of your baby’s hearing system. The Audiologist will explain each test during the appointment.

When will my baby need to be tested?
Babies with a ‘refer’ result for both ears should be tested within 2 weeks of their second screen. Babies with a ‘refer’ result for one ear should be tested within 6 weeks of their second screen.

How long will the testing take?
It will be different for each baby, but each appointment can take up to 3 hours. Most babies don’t need this amount of time, but it is best to allow for half a day just in case.

How do I prepare my baby for the tests?
Your Audiologist will call you or send you information on how to prepare your baby for testing.

Preparing your baby will help with the test process. Your baby needs to arrive at the appointment awake, but tired and ready to sleep. This is because most of the testing is done while your baby is asleep, as movement interferes with the test.

It is important to call the Audiologist before the day of the appointment if you don’t receive the preparation information or you are unsure of what to do.

What are the possible results of my baby’s diagnostic hearing tests?

Out of every 10 babies tested by an Audiologist...

- about 5 are found to have normal hearing...
- about 4 are found to have a temporary hearing loss...
- and about 1 is found to have a permanent hearing loss in one or both ears.

What if my baby has a hearing loss?
If your baby has a temporary hearing loss, your Audiologist will want to see them again to monitor their hearing. If the temporary hearing loss doesn’t improve, the Audiologist will recommend your baby sees an Ear Nose and Throat (ENT) specialist.

If your baby has a permanent hearing loss, your Audiologist will refer your baby to some or all of the following:
- Childhood Hearing Clinic
- Ear Nose and Throat specialist
- Paediatrician
- Australian Hearing (for hearing aid fitting)
- Queensland Hearing Loss Family Support Service (QHFLSS)
- other specialist services as required.