

Tests and Procedures After Birth

By law certain screening tests are performed on all newborns. These tests are:

- Apgar evaluation
- Newborn Metabolic Screening

In addition, the following procedures are routinely done:

- eye care
- vitamin K shot
- hearing test
- complete check-up
- hepatitis B vaccine

After giving birth, you will be in no condition to determine the relative merits of these procedures, so it is a good idea to do your homework in advance. If you are in a hospital, moreover, you will have to “go with the program” unless you have expressed your will to the contrary, in writing, and have a written statement from the hospital acknowledging your request.

Apgar Evaluation

The Apgar test is a quick way for doctors to figure out if the baby is healthy or needs extra medical care. Apgar tests are usually done twice: one minute after birth and again five minutes after birth. Doctors and nurses measure 5 signs of the baby's condition:

- heart rate
- breathing
- activity and muscle tone
- reflexes
- skin color

Apgar scores range from 0 to 10. A baby who scores 7 or more is considered very healthy. But a lower score doesn't always mean there is something wrong. Perfectly healthy babies often have low Apgar scores in the first minute of life.

In more than 98% of cases, the Apgar score reaches 7 after 5 minutes of life. When it does not, the baby needs medical care and close monitoring.

Newborn Metabolic Screening

A doctor or nurse will prick your baby's heel to take a tiny sample of blood. They use this blood to test for many diseases. All 50 states require testing for at least two disorders: phenylketonuria and congenital hypothyroidism. But there are up to 30 different diseases for which many states require testing.

While the blood sample is mandatory, it is not necessary to do it in the first few hours of the baby's life. It is perfectly appropriate to wait until the baby has nursed and rested and appears to be comfortable. After the blood sample, apply *Hypercal* cream (by Nelson Homeopathic) to the site of the prick—your baby will stop crying immediately. Alternately, you can use *Hypericum* (St. John's wort) tincture.

Eye Care

Many hospitals routinely apply silver nitrate or antibiotics (erythromycin or tetracycline) to your newborn's eyes. These medicines are supposed to prevent infection by sexually

transmitted diseases, such as gonorrhea and chlamydia. The medicines can sting and/or blur your baby's vision.

There have been several studies showing that such eye applications have no significant value.¹ Also, there is evidence that the STD bacteria are not passed to the infant in the birth canal, but *after birth*. The most likely source of these bacteria is the hospital environment itself—especially the hands of the medical personnel swabbing your baby's eyes!

Vitamin K shot

If you have not given instructions to the contrary, the medical facility will give your baby a vitamin K shot. The purpose of the shot is to prevent (or slow) a rare problem of brain hemorrhage in the first few weeks after birth. This problem occurs in about 5 out of 100,000 babies (.005 %). Vitamin K promotes blood clotting. The fetus has low levels of vitamin K as well as other clotting factors.

Studies show that the level of vitamin K is regulated very precisely to help control the rate of rapid cell division during fetal development. High levels of vitamin K can cause cell division to get out of hand, leading to cancer.

The bottom line is that you must decide whether or not it is worth risking harm to your baby in order to prevent a very rare disease.

Hearing Test

Many hospitals offer newborn hearing tests. Tiny earphones or microphones are used to see how the baby reacts to sounds.

A newborn with normal hearing may fail the first screening due to debris in the ear canal, fluid in the middle ear or moving/crying during the test. Don't worry if your baby fails the test. If you observe that your baby does not respond to sounds in the next few weeks, get a repeat test.

Complete Check-up

There is no rush to give your baby a complete check-up. Wait until you and your baby have had ample time to recover from the stress of birth.

Hepatitis B shot

Hospitals now routinely administer a Hepatitis B vaccination to new born babies. The rationale for this procedure is a bit unclear. Hepatitis B is transmitted via blood transfusion

¹ The following studies are worth reading:

- Bell TA, Grayston JT, Krohn MA, Kronmal RA. Randomized trial of silver nitrate, erythromycin, and no eye prophylaxis for the prevention of conjunctivitis among newborns not at risk for gonococcal ophthalmitis. *Pediatrics* 1993 Dec;92(6):755-60.
- Chen JY. Prophylaxis of ophthalmia neonatorum: comparison of silver nitrate, tetracycline, erythromycin and no prophylaxis. *Pediatr Infect Dis J* 1992 Dec;11(12):1026-30.
- Krohn MA, Hillier SL, Bell TA, Kronmal RA, Grayston JT. The bacterial etiology of conjunctivitis in early infancy. *Am J Epidemiol* 1993 Sep 1;138(5):326-32.
- Black-Payne C, Bocchini JA Jr, Cedotal C. Failure of erythromycin ointment for postnatal ocular prophylaxis of chlamydial conjunctivitis. *Pediatr Infect Dis J* 1989 Aug;8(8):491-5.

or intravenous drug use. Clearly, your newborn is not in any immediate danger from either of these two sources.

The idea of vaccines is to stress the immune system by introducing a foreign antigen into the body, which in turn forces the immune system to produce antibodies. It is these antibodies that supposedly protect against the disease in question, although even this point is doubtful.

In any case, a newborn baby does not have an immune system! For the first year of life, the newborn will rely on maternal antibodies from breast milk for protection against disease. How can the baby's undeveloped immune system be expected to produce antibodies to a vaccine?

It is strongly recommended that you decline the Hepatitis B vaccine.

The homeopathic perspective on vaccination is explained fully in *Homeoprophylaxis: Better than Vaccination?*, available from home.mindspring.com/~diderikfinne/homeoprophylaxis.pdf.