



## A simple blood test could save your baby's life

### ∞ Why is my baby tested?

A simple, quick blood test provides important information about your baby's health. A newborn baby can look healthy, but have a serious disorder that you or your doctor may not know about. The newborn screening test identifies those few infants who may have one of a number of rare disorders. If not treated, these disorders can cause mental retardation, blindness, liver problems, brain damage or even death.

### ∞ Why is early detection so important?

With early detection and treatment, illness from these disorders can usually be prevented.

### ∞ Which disorders are included in the Newborn Screening Test?

In British Columbia, all babies are tested for Hypothyroidism, Phenylketonuria (PKU), Galactosemia and Medium Chain Acyl-CoA Dehydrogenase Deficiency (MCAD).

### ∞ How will my baby be tested?

A few drops of blood are taken from the heel of your baby's foot. The same blood sample is used for all tests.

### ∞ How soon after birth will my baby be tested?

Newborn babies are tested between 24 and 48 hours after birth. The test is done before the baby leaves the hospital.

### ∞ What if I go home before my baby is 24 hours old?

The blood test for PKU may not give true results if done too soon after birth. If your baby's blood is tested before 24 hours of age, a second test is done when your baby is one to two weeks old. (American Academy of Pediatrics Policy Statement)

### ∞ Can I wait and have my baby tested later?

Hypothyroidism and Galactosemia can be detected by the blood test any time after birth. The earlier these treatable disorders are found, the better the outcome will be for your baby. Babies should not leave the hospital without a blood test.

### ∞ How will I find out the results of the test?

Your baby's test results will be reported to the hospital where your baby was born. If the results indicate that further testing is needed, your doctor or midwife will also be notified. Make sure that your baby has had this important test.

### ∞ What does a positive blood test mean?

A positive blood test does not necessarily mean that your baby has one of these disorders, but it is possible. More in-depth testing will be done.

### ∞ What if the results show that my baby has one of the disorders after all the tests are done?

Your baby will need treatment from a doctor who specializes in these diseases. You are referred to a specialist right away. Treatment can start in a few days.

Developed by:  
Newborn Screening Program of British Columbia  
Children's and Women's Health Centre of B.C. Quality and Risk  
Management  
BC Women's Family Education  
Revised February 1, 2003

For more information, go to our website at:  
<http://www.cw.bc.ca/newbornScreening/default.asp>

## Newborn Screening in British Columbia includes testing for the following disorders:

### ∞ Hypothyroidism

A baby born with hypothyroidism cannot make enough thyroid hormone. Thyroid hormone keeps a baby's body growing strong and healthy. Without it, delayed growth and brain damage occur. If found early and treated with thyroid hormone, these children have normal growth and intelligence. One baby in 3,500 is born with hypothyroidism.

### ∞ Phenylketonuria (PKU)

A baby with PKU is missing an enzyme that is needed to process the essential amino acid phenylalanine, found in certain foods. Without treatment, phenylalanine builds up in the baby's blood and causes mental retardation. If PKU is found early, the baby is fed a special diet that is low in phenylalanine. Most children with PKU who are treated early have normal intelligence. One baby in 15,000 is born with PKU.

### ∞ Galactosemia

A baby with this disorder cannot process galactose, a sugar found in milk. If galactosemia is not treated, it can cause damage to the baby's eyes, liver, and brain. These problems are prevented with a special diet. One baby in 60,000 is born with galactosemia.

### ∞ Medium Chain Acyl-CoA Dehydrogenase Deficiency (MCAD)

A baby with this condition may have problems using fats stored in their body as an energy source. These babies do fine when they are eating well, but when they get colds and flus, they may not be able to use stored fats for energy. There is a risk of sudden unexpected death which can be prevented by using a special diet and avoiding fasting. One baby in 20,000 is born with MCAD deficiency.