

Pulse Oximetry Newborn Screening Parent Information Guide

- All healthy newborn infants born at STPH will have pulse oximetry testing.
- A pulse oximetry screening can identify some infants with a critical congenital heart defect (CCHD).
- Babies with a critical congenital heart defect are at significant risk for death or disability if their CCHD is not diagnosed and treated soon after birth.
- At 24-48 hours after birth, your baby will have the pulse oximetry test to determine the amount of oxygen in your baby's blood and your baby's pulse rate.
- Low levels of oxygen in the blood can be a sign of a CCHD.
- The test is done using a machine called a pulse oximeter, with sensors placed on your baby's skin. The test is painless and takes only a few minutes.
- Pulse oximetry screening does not replace complete history and physical examination, which sometimes can detect CCHD before the development of low levels of oxygen in the blood. Pulse oximetry screening is used to complement the physical examination.
- If the results are "negative" it means the baby's test results did not show signs of a CCHD. This type of screening test does not detect all CCHDs, so it is possible to still have a CCHD with a negative screening result.
- If the results are "positive" it means the baby's test results showed low levels of oxygen in the blood, which can be a sign of a CCHD. This does not always mean the baby has a CCHD; it just means more testing is needed. The baby's doctor might recommend that your infant have more specific tests, like an echocardiogram (an ultrasound picture of the heart), to diagnose a CCHD.

