

# A Parent's Guide to ABR Testing



## Why does my child need this test?

Your child may have referred for any of the following reasons:

- Your baby did not pass their newborn hearing screening in one or both ears, or did not receive a newborn hearing screening at birth.
- Your baby may have had certain birth complications that can put them at greater risk for hearing loss.
- Your baby has other medical conditions that are linked with hearing loss.
- You may have a known family history of permanent hearing loss during childhood.
- Your child's audiologist could not obtain reliable results using other types of hearing testing.



## How will it be done?

- 🕒 There will be a 2–3 hour long appointment with a few types of non-invasive, painless tests, completed by an audiologist.
- 👩‍⚕️ An audiologist is a doctor who specializes in hearing and balance testing, and who may also fit hearing technology.
- 🧠 The Auditory Brainstem Response (ABR) evaluation tests your child's auditory system while they sleep, or while they are under sedation.
  - This involves measuring their brain's responses to sound using electrode stickers on their head.
  - Small earphones will be placed in your child's ear to play/present sounds.
- 📶 The ABR test can confirm the presence, type, and degree of any hearing loss.
- 👂 Your audiologist may also check the health of your child's ears. These tests involve a small rubber tip held in your child's ear for a few seconds or minutes. Types of tests include:

- The tympanogram is a test of eardrum health & function—to detect fluid or congestion which can impact hearing.
- The Otoacoustic Emissions (OAE) test is a test of inner ear health. The results of the OAE test can provide some basic information about the presence/absence of hearing loss.

## How can I prepare for this test?



- Your baby must be asleep for ABR testing.
- Try your best to make sure they are tired and hungry before your appointment!
- Schedule your appointment during a regular nap time or feeding time to help them fall asleep.
- Communicate with your child's audiologist regarding what works best for your baby (rocking, pacifier use, etc.)
- Bring what you will need to help them feel comfortable and fall asleep, i.e., a bottle, diapers, blankets, pacifier, etc.
- They will sleep in your arms, your car seat/stroller, or in a crib during testing.



When the audiologist is finished, they can tell you how your child hears or they may require you to come back for additional testing.

**Some of these tests may not be completed in one appointment due to babies being babies!** Because a calm, sleeping baby is required for most of the testing, it is not uncommon for families to be asked to return for additional testing. This allows the audiologist to get a more complete picture of your child's hearing; this does not necessarily mean they have a hearing loss. While this can be a stressful process, it is important to complete **all** testing so appropriate referrals and recommendations can be made to support your child's language development. As a parent, you can help this process by bringing whatever your baby might need to stay asleep. Despite your best efforts, your child may not want to sleep, and that's okay!



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## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)



### Why an ABR test?

- This kind of test is used on infants ages birth to 6 months while they sleep, so we can test their hearing without requiring a response from them.
- Children over 6 months may require sedation to complete the ABR.



### Will I know the results right away?

- Your audiologist can tell you when they are finished if your baby's hearing is "normal", or they will ask you to come back for a repeat ABR.



### Why would I need another test?

- Sometimes testing cannot be completed in one appointment. Multiple types of tests are used to get a complete picture of your child's hearing; one test alone is not enough.
- Your baby may need additional testing if they woke up too soon, the results were inconclusive, or hearing loss was found.



### What if hearing loss is detected?

- Your audiologist will confirm results with a follow-up ABR.
- Then, they will refer you to an Ear, Nose, and Throat (ENT) physician, who specializes in the health and structure of ears and hearing, to look for a potential cause for hearing loss. If your child is a candidate for hearing technology, the ENT will provide the medical clearance for hearing technology required before fitting.
- Once medically cleared, the audiologist can provide recommendations and guidance of hearing technology to help increase your child's access to sound, which may support their development of spoken language if that is your family's goal.
- You can also receive support from multiple service providers to help support your child, and your family. Your audiologist will refer you to the appropriate service providers.



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## Resources



- If you have any additional questions, you should bring them up to your audiologist, pediatrician, or other service providers on your child's team.

### EIFS Specialist

**207-781-6230**, [referrals@mecdhh.org](mailto:referrals@mecdhh.org)

- The Early Intervention and Family Services (EIFS) team at the Maine Educational Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MECDHH) is trained to support families through the process of audiological testing. You may already have an EIFS specialist as part of your team through Child Development Services. If not, please contact us for more information and support.

### MNHP Parent Consultant

**207-239-7300**, [parentconsultantmnhp@gmail.com](mailto:parentconsultantmnhp@gmail.com)

- If your child is diagnosed with hearing loss **before the age of 4 years**, the Parent Consultant from the Maine Newborn Hearing Program will call you to discuss available resources and next steps. The Parent Consultant is the parent of a deaf child who offers parent-to-parent support as someone who has previously been through this journey with their own child.

### Parent Guides

[mainegbys@gmail.com](mailto:mainegbys@gmail.com)

- Parent Guides from the Maine Hands & Voices Guide By Your Side Program provide unbiased support through specially trained parents of children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

### Maine's EHDI Process App

- Maine's EHDI Process App was developed to help families and the professionals who support them better understand the newborn hearing screening through diagnosis and into early intervention process, as well as make them aware of available resources. The App is available to download at no cost.

Scan this QR code to see the iOS App →



Scan this QR code to see the Android App →

