

Critical Congenital Heart Disease

Critical congenital heart diseases (CCHD) are the most common of all birth defects. These can affect 1 in every 100 babies born in the US each year. About half of babies born with CCHD are diagnosed after birth, when a seemingly healthy baby has life-threatening problems and requires emergency care.

Kentucky does a simple test before the baby is sent home from the hospital after birth. This is called Pulse Oximetry Testing.

Pulse oximetry measures the oxygen level of the baby's blood. Pulse Oximetry Testing is performed by putting a sensor on the baby's foot and hand to read the oxygen percentage in the baby's blood. This is not painful to the baby and only takes minutes to perform.

If this test is not normal, hospital staff will call the baby's doctor to discuss the results. Additional tests and seeing a specialist may be needed.

What are the advantages to Newborn Screening for CCHD?

By doing this simple test, potential life-threatening heart defects can be identified early in a seemingly healthy newborn baby. It is important to find these defects immediately so that treatment can begin early.