



HUTT maternity

Hutt Valley Maternity Care

Critical Congenital Heart Defects

Screening Babies for Heart
Problems

Information for parents



Each week in New Zealand, 12 babies are born with a heart defect.

Up to half are diagnosed before birth by antenatal scan or immediately after birth when they are unwell, but some babies may go home without knowing there is a problem.

Pulse oximetry screening is a safe, painless way of measuring the oxygen levels in your baby. It involves placing a little light and a sensor on the skin of the hand and foot. When combined with antenatal scans and a physical examination by a midwife, nurse or medical professional it can detect 9 out of 10 cases of heart defects. Screening may also help detect babies who have problems with their lungs or infection.

Screening programs are being implemented in many countries including America, the United Kingdom and Australia. Screening is now offered at HVDHB to infants prior to discharge. Please ask your midwife, nurse or doctor for further information.

Even with screening a small number of problems may not be picked up prior to going home. If your baby becomes breathless or unwell at home, please contact your midwife or doctor as soon as concerning signs are seen.



Contact us

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