

Protecting Your Baby's Newborn Screening Health Information

FACTS FOR PARENTS: Newborn Screening

What is Newborn Screening?

Blood is collected from the heels of all Montana newborns on special paper. Circles are "punched" from the cards to test the blood for 28 different conditions that may cause serious illness or even death if not detected and treated within a few weeks or months after birth. The Montana Public Health Laboratory (MTPHL) in Helena receives the cards from hospitals or midwives, performs the testing, and reports results to health care providers.

What happens to the newborn screening specimens after testing?

MTPHL has a policy, approved by the state medical officer, to store the dried blood spot cards in a secure freezer. The cards are destroyed after one year.

Are the newborn screening specimens ever used again?

Specimens may be re-tested to check the original test results. MTPHL may also use these specimens for validation and comparison studies for new test development. Names are never used.

Do the newborn screening specimens ever leave Montana?

Montana has an arrangement with the Wisconsin State Laboratory to perform some of our newborn screening tests. We send part of the specimen card to Wisconsin for testing. Wisconsin also destroys the specimens they receive.

Are newborn screening specimens collected on a national level?

No, they are not collected on a national level.

Is DNA obtained from newborn screening specimens?

Newborn screening cards are a potential source of DNA, as is all blood and tissue. The screening tests performed on Montana babies measure levels of chemicals in the blood - enzymes, building blocks of proteins and fats. DNA is not obtained from any of Montana's specimens.

How long is the information from newborn screening kept?

All screening results are maintained for at least two years in the laboratory secure computer system. MTPHL has a very strict policy regarding the handling of the newborn screening results to make sure private health information only goes to the healthcare professional that provides medical care for the baby.

For more information about Newborn Screening in Montana, see [Montana's Newborn Screening Brochure for Parents \(pdf\)](#).

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