TAYLOR Regional Hospital

TAYLOR TIDBITS

Newborn Screening Awareness

The month of September highlights the importance of the Newborn Screening Program. Georgia's Newborn Screening program was implemented by law in 1969 with the goal to test all newborns at birth for disorders that can cause major illness, mental retardation, or premature death if early intervention and treatment is delayed. Many of the disorders may be inherited, infections, or caused by a medical problem of the mother. To date, Georgia has screened over 2 million babies before discharge from the hospital. Georgia law requires that every newborn must have a blood specimen collected prior to discharge from the hospital regardless of gestational age or status of feeding.

The newborn screening specimen is collected within 24 to 48 hours of a child's birth by collecting a few drops of blood through a heel stick procedure. The blood spots collected on a state newborn screening card and sent to the Georgia Public Health Laboratory in Atlanta. Results of the newborn screening test will be sent to the primary pediatrician and to the birth hospital. The newborn screening program will test for the following disorders: Sickle Cell Disorders, Phenylketonuria (PKU), Maple Syrup Urine Disease, Hypothyroidism, Cystic Fibrosis, Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia (CAH), Tyrosinemia, Homocystinuria, Biotinidase Deficiency, Fatty Acid Disorders, Organic Acid Disorders, and Urea Cycle Disorders. The newborn screening follow-up program will also notify the parents so that the baby can receive immediate attention, because most babies with these inherited disorders appear healthy and have no signs illness at birth. Parents should take an active role in the newborn screening process by asking the hospital staff if the test has been collected and to ensure that their correct contact information is given to the nursery staff for the specimen card. It is extremely important that the Georgia Department of Public Health, the birthing hospital, and the primary pediatrician can easily contact the parents should the newborn have abnormal test results or need to be re-screened. The newborn screening blood screening can identify diseases early so that the necessary medical treatment can be initiated as soon as possible allowing these newborns to have the best chance at a healthy and happy life.

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