

## Oximetry Screening to Detect Critical Congenital Heart Disease

This pamphlet provides you with some information about oximetry screening for your baby. One percent of all babies are born with a heart condition which, if not picked up on ultrasound or through an examination, can cause the baby to become very unwell in the first few weeks of life. Routine ultrasound and examination of babies may still miss around 25 percent of serious heart defects.

**Pulse Oximetry** is a probe placed on the baby's foot that measures oxygen levels (or saturations). It is not painful and takes less than five minutes. Your baby may have already had oximetry for other reasons as it's a commonly used test for newborns. Oximetry will pick up about **half** of the cases of congenital heart disease that are missed during routine tests. If the oxygen level is abnormally low (in about one percent of cases) your baby may need to stay in hospital to check there are no other reasons for the low level, for example, an infection. If the oxygen saturation level remains low your baby will have an ultrasound of their heart (echocardiogram). This will tell us if there is a heart problem.

The biggest concern for you will be the stress of waiting to know if there is something wrong with your baby's heart if the oximetry test is low. Please be assured that even if the test is abnormally low it is still most likely that your baby has a normal heart.

This test should not delay your discharge home, however in some cases delays may occur. As this test will help us to ensure your baby is healthy before being discharged home it is important to wait for the results.

**If at any time you are unsure about the test  
please talk to your midwife or doctor.**

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