

Health News: News

All Newborns Should Have Ears Screened, Task Force Says

7/18/2008 12:00:00 AM

FRIDAY, July 18 (HealthDay News) -- A national task force is recommending that all newborns be screened for congenital hearing loss.

"Screening for hearing loss should be part of every newborn infant's health care evaluation," U.S. Preventive Services Task Force Chairman Ned Calonge, who is also chief medical officer for the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, said in a news release issued by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. "Screening at birth allows for hearing loss to be detected early and is associated with better outcomes for infants who test positive," he said.

Children born with impaired hearing or who develop it during infancy or early childhood can have problems with communication and social skills, behavioral problems and poor academic achievement compared with children with normal hearing. The earlier a hearing problem is found and treated, the better the child's chances for positive outcomes later in life, such as stronger language skills.

Because half of babies with hearing loss have no known risk factors, the task force calls for universal rather than targeted screening.

The task force, an independent panel of experts in prevention and primary care, make the recommendation along with a summary of evidence for their position in the July issue of *Pediatrics*.

Up to three of every 1,000 U.S. babies are born with congenital hearing loss; however, it is screened for less frequently than other conditions.

The task force recommends screening using a two-step process to check the responses to sound of inner ear and the auditory brainstem.