

**Mercy Birth Center  
Patient / Parent Education for  
Screening for Critical Congenital Heart Disease (CCHD)**

**What is congenital heart disease (CHD)?**

- CHD is a problem in the structure of the heart or its major blood vessels. It is the most common birth defect.
- Some forms of CHD are very serious (critical). These can cause a baby to become sick soon after birth.

**How do you check for CHD?**

- Before your baby goes home, we will check for:
- A sound in the baby's heart (called a heart murmur)
- Abnormal heart rate, breathing or blood pressure.
- We will also do a **pulse oximetry** [ox-EH-mah-tree] **test** to check for low oxygen levels.

**What is pulse oximetry?**

- Pulse oximetry is a simple, painless test that measures how much oxygen is in the blood. It is sometimes called a "pulse ox."
- We will place a sticky strip, like a Band-Aid, on your baby's hand and foot. A small red light on the strip measures your baby's oxygen level.
- This will only be on your baby's skin for a few minutes. **It will not hurt your baby.**

**Why should my baby have pulse oximetry?**

- Low oxygen can be a sign of serious CHD. **If your baby has CHD, this test may tell us before your baby becomes sick.**
- Low oxygen may also occur if:
- Your baby's lungs and heart are adjusting after birth
- Your baby has a lung problem.

**What is a normal pulse-ox result?**

- A normal reading is **95 to 100 percent, with a difference of less than or equal to 3 points between the hand and the foot results.**
- It is possible for a baby with serious CHD to have a normal reading. Your baby should have regular doctor visits.

**What happens if my baby has low oxygen?**

- If the pulse-ox reading is low, we may consult with another doctor, or we may order more tests.
- The most common test is called an echocardiogram, or "echo." This is an ultrasound of the heart. The echo test looks at the heart and blood flow. **It will not hurt your baby.**

**When will we get the results and what if I have questions?**

The results will be reviewed with you before your baby leaves the hospital.

If you have questions about CHD or pulse oximetry, talk to the doctor or nurse caring for your baby.