



Texas Newborn Screening

Take the Newborn Screening Quiz ...

Those of us who work with the Newborn Screening Program (NBS) are sometimes surprised by what we hear our submitters describe as the necessary characteristics for an acceptable newborn screening specimen. In this newsletter, we will share some of the comments we have heard over the years. It's important to remember that much of what people know about collecting these specimens has come from word of mouth information passed down since 1965. It's easy to see how misinformation can take on a life of its own over that many years!

We have also included common questions asked to the Case Management Program staff. Case Management follows the babies who have abnormal screens to ensure they are either cleared or receive appropriate treatment.

Here is an opportunity to quiz your knowledge by choosing the correct response to the statements below. **Answers can be found on the back page.**

1. Blood spots cannot touch each other.
True False
2. Blood cannot be outside the circles.
True False
3. The State will reject the specimen if there is not blood in all five circles.
True False
4. Lots of blood on the paper is good because labs like blood. Labs want all the blood they can get!
True False
5. We should retain the yellow copy of the collection kit filter paper.
True False
6. We can't collect specimens on Fridays because we wouldn't be able to mail them until Monday.
True False

7. One blood circle is used for each test.
True False
8. One circle of blood is all that is needed on a repeat specimen for an unsatisfactory or abnormal test result.
True False
9. There's a right and a wrong side of the paper to use for applying blood.
True False
10. The Newborn Screen can also be referred to as the "PKU Test."
True False
11. It is not unusual for the baby's name to change prior to collection of the second screen.
True False
12. NBS Case Management should be notified if the first screen is abnormal and the baby has expired.
True False
13. NBS Case Management should be notified if the first screen is normal and the baby has expired.
True False
14. Parents are notified of all Newborn Screening results.
True False
15. If the baby is older than 2 weeks of age, I still need to collect the 2nd screen.
True False
16. Parents may collect the 2nd screen if properly instructed by staff.
True False

To order free literature from the Newborn Screening Program for patients and specimen collection information for submitters, please call 1-800-252-8023, ext. 2129 or order online: <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/newborn/pubs.htm>

How Did You Do? ...

1. **Blood spots cannot touch each other – False.** The test samples are taken from inside the blood circles. The most important thing is that the blood completely fills the circles and properly saturates the paper. Blood that is outside the circles is of little concern.
 2. **Blood cannot be outside the circles – False (see answer above).** The purpose of the circles on the filter paper is to ensure that the size of the blood circles is adequate for the punching machines to cut the test samples from the blood circles. The circle outlines are there to ensure a minimum size rather than to limit how large the blood spot can be.
 3. **The State will reject the specimen if there is not blood in all five circles. – False.** There must be at least two full circles of blood properly collected to perform the initial screening procedures. About a third of the specimens will have additional testing performed that requires blood from the remaining circles. All positive results and many of the negative results are confirmed by additional testing before the results are reported. We strongly urge submitting five full circles of blood to ensure there is enough blood to complete the testing. For situations where the baby is not bleeding well enough to get five circles of blood, the best approach is to submit 2-4 circles that are completely filled and saturated. Three full circles of blood are better than five partially filled circles.
 4. **Lots of blood on the paper is good because labs like blood. Labs want all the blood they can get! – False.** We do request 5 full circles of blood, however a heavy application of blood is not a good thing. In fact, caked, layered, and clotted blood is the leading cause of specimens being reported as unsatisfactory for hypothyroid screening. Excess blood is most often caused by applying blood to both sides of the paper or from going back and forth between circles to add more blood. The correct technique is to apply the blood to one side of the paper while watching the other side for complete filling. Work on one circle at a time. It will probably take 2-3 large drops of blood to fill and saturate each circle. Completely finish filling a circle before starting the next circle.
 5. **We should retain the yellow copy of the collection filter paper. – True.** The yellow copy is essential to help track your specimen if needed. This information will help us determine the status of the specimen.
 6. **We can't collect specimens on Fridays because we wouldn't be able to mail them until Monday. – False.** Specimens are rejected as too old to test if they arrive at the lab more than 13 days from the date of collection. Holding a specimen over the weekend should not cause enough delay for the specimen to be rejected. It's better to collect the specimen when the baby is there than to schedule a return appointment.
- Specimens may be collected and mailed on Fridays if dried properly (4 hours).
7. **One blood circle is used for each test. – False (see answer #3).**
 8. **One circle of blood is all that is needed on a repeat specimen for an unsatisfactory or abnormal test result. – False.** All specimens receive the entire battery of five newborn screening tests. This is because the lab receives more than 3500 specimens each day and it is more efficient to perform all the tests than to organize small groups of specimens for single tests.
 9. **There's a right and a wrong side of the paper to use for applying blood. – False.** Either side of the filter paper is acceptable for applying blood. The main thing to remember is to just apply the blood from one side of the paper, but it doesn't matter which side you choose.
 10. **The Newborn Screen can also be referred to as the "PKU Test." – False!** The Newborn Screening Program screens for 5 disorders. Every effort should be made to call the test the Newborn Screening Test.
 11. **It is not unusual for the baby's name to change prior to collection of the 2nd screen. – True.** If the 1st screen is abnormal, please contact Case Management (1-800-252-8023) if the baby's name will be different on the 2nd screen.
 12. **NBS Case Management should be notified if the first screen is abnormal and the baby has expired. – True.** NBS maintains an automated system to notify parents of abnormal screens. In order to avoid unnecessary stress to parents who have lost their child, NBS should be notified immediately in order to remove the baby from the NBS Follow-Up system. Call 1-800-252-8023.
 13. **NBS Case Management should be notified if the first screen is normal and the baby has expired. – False.** Case Management does not follow normal screens.
 14. **NBS staff notifies parents of all Newborn Screening results. – False.** Parents only receive notification of abnormal results.
 15. **If the baby is older than 2 weeks of age, I still need to collect the 2nd newborn screen. – True.** Ideally, the 2nd screen should be collected within 7-14 days. However, we only recommend a heel-stick for babies up to 1 year of age. Thereafter, an alternative blood draw should be considered.
 16. **Parents may collect the 2nd screen if properly instructed by staff. – False.** This is not a recommended practice.