Hearing loss is an invisible handicap that can go undetected in infants. It is often not discovered until someone notices that a child is not talking normally, usually when he or she is two years old or older. Before babies learn to respond to words, we have conversations with them. As we talk to them, they learn to understand language and how it is used.

About one in every 250 children has enough of a hearing loss to make normal speech and language development difficult. When a hearing loss is found early in a child’s life, treatment can begin at once, and long-term problems may be prevented.

Newborns can be tested for hearing loss using one of two different tests:

**Otoacoustic Emission (OAE) Testing**
A small probe that plays a series of sounds is placed into the ear canal. The response of the cochlea, one of the organs for hearing, is measured and recorded.

**Brainstem Auditory Evoked Response (BAER) Test**
Three electrodes, which are like small Band Aids, are placed on your baby’s head. A small headphone is placed on each ear. Soft clicking sounds are sent through the headphones and the electrodes measure how the brain responds to the sounds.

At least one of these tests is given to all babies at Mount Carmel East, West, and St Ann’s. It takes 10-15 minutes and is done while your baby is sleeping.

The results of the hearing test will be given to you and to your baby’s doctor. If your baby is found to have hearing loss, information about treatment and resources to help his or her language development will be provided.

If you have any questions about having your newborn’s hearing tested, or the results of the test, please ask your baby’s doctor or nurse.