



Dr. G'Anne Thomas & Associates

Hearing & Balance Clinics

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What is an Auditory Brainstem Response Test?

An auditory brainstem response (ABR) test is a safe and painless test to see how the hearing nerves and brain respond to sounds. It gives health care providers information about possible hearing loss.

Why Are Auditory Brainstem Response Tests Done?

ABR's are done when:

- A baby fails a newborn hearing screening.
- A child is too young to do a regular hearing test in a sound booth or has a medical or developmental problem that makes responding to the sounds of a regular hearing test difficult.

How Should We Prepare for an Infant ABR?

Younger than 5 months, the ABR can usually be done without sedation. We only offer non-sedated infant ABR's in our clinic. Your baby must sleep during the entire test.

To help your baby stay asleep:

- In the hours before the test, do not feed your baby or let your baby sleep.
- Arrive for the test when your baby is hungry and tired, but awake.
- Before the test begins, the audiologist will ask you to feed your baby and get your little one comfortable. Your baby can sleep in your arms for the test.

How is an ABR Done?

An audiologist places a small earphone in the child's ears and informational electrodes (small sensor stickers) near the ears and on the forehead. Clicking sounds and tones go through the earphones and electrodes measure how the hearing nerves and brain responds to the sounds.

How Long Does an ABR Take?

An ABR test usually takes 1–2 hours, but the appointment may last about 3 hours. If a sleeping baby wakes up during the test, the test will take longer because the baby will need to fall back asleep again to finish the test.

What Happens After an ABR?

The audiologist will let you know how the test went and discuss the next steps with you.

When Are the ABR Results Ready?

The audiologist will discuss the test with you when it's done. A final report with recommendations will be available in a few weeks. If a hearing loss is found, the report also will go to the newborn hearing screening coordinator in your state.

Are There Any Risks From ABRs?

No. ABRs are safe, do not hurt, and do not have any side effects. If your child needs sedation, discuss the risks and benefits with your health care provider or sedation team before the test.

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