

NEWBORN SCREENING PROGRAM

Starting November 9, 2009, the BC Newborn Screening Program, a collaboration of BC Women's Hospital & Health Centre, BC Children's Hospital and the BC Perinatal Health Program, all part of the Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA), is expanding the number of disorders it screens from six to 18. The expansion, which was first announced in 2008 and has been in development for the past year, is funded by the BC Ministry of Health Services.

All 18 disorders on the test panel are treatable; they include metabolic, endocrine, blood disorders and cystic fibrosis. In October 2010, a 19th disorder (congenital adrenal hyperplasia) will be added. Early identification of these disorders allows treatment that may prevent severe mental handicap, growth problems, other health problems or sudden infant death.

About 40,000 babies are screened each year using a simple blood test; the expanded program expects to identify about 40 babies per year (one in 1,000) with one of the treatable disorders. BC will be one of the first jurisdictions in Canada to implement second tier testing for selected disorders. A "second tier" test confirms abnormal results and reduces false positive results. "Second tier" testing for cystic fibrosis will be implemented in October 2009 and in 2010 for six other conditions.

The expansion of BC's newborn screening is based on recommendations from the Newborn Screening Advisory Committee.

In collaboration with the BC Perinatal Health Program, the **Newborn Screening Guideline** has been updated (attached). Other educational materials have been developed including a **patient information sheet** (English version attached; translated versions will be available soon) and **disorder-specific information sheets**. Downloadable copies are available at: www.bcphp.ca or www.newbornscreeningbc.ca.

Minor changes have been made to the blood spot card (refer to Appendix 3 in the guideline; the number of blood spots remains the same). Existing cards can be used until depleted or until their expiry date. You may order new cards through the BC Newborn Screening Laboratory: 604 875-2148.

Please forward this information to people in your organization who work with pregnant women and newborns.

For more information... please contact us or go to: www.bcphp.ca or www.newbornscreeningbc.ca