



**Indiana
Department
of
Health**

Genomics and Newborn Screening

Fall 2024 Newsletter

Spotlight



September is Newborn Screening Awareness Month

September has been an exciting month for the Genomics and Newborn Screening Program. As this month draws to a close, we want to spotlight three crucial health observances: Newborn Screening Awareness Month, Sickle Cell Awareness Month and Folic Acid Awareness Week. Together, these observances emphasize the program's commitment to health, early intervention and informed care. We encourage everyone to learn more, spread awareness and engage in conversations that promote better health for all.

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Early Health

Notice for Newborns

This September, Indiana has highlighted the critical importance of newborn screening through its dedicated awareness month. Newborn screening is a vital public health program designed to identify serious conditions in newborns before symptoms appear, allowing for timely intervention and better outcomes.

Newborn screening includes three tests: a hearing screen, a screen for critical congenital heart disease, and a dried blood spot screen for genetic conditions such as cystic fibrosis. Newborn screening allows healthcare providers to implement treatments and interventions that significantly improve the quality of life and health of affected infants.

The Perinatal Genetics and Genomics (PGG) Advisory Committee also plays a key role in the state's efforts. This committee provides expert guidance on adding and integrating new conditions into clinical care, ensuring that Indiana's newborn screening program includes conditions with significant public health impact and effective testing, treatment, and follow-up strategies.



In addition to screening, the program collects and presents data on newborn health outcomes in Indiana. This data includes short-term follow up for immediate needs like diagnostic testing and starting treatment, and long-term follow up to monitor their health over time. The program is always working to improve these follow up systems to better support families and strengthen public health efforts.

For more information about newborn screening, click the link below or visit Indiana's newborn screening program website.

[CLICK THIS LINK](#)



Focus on Folic Acid

Folic Acid Awareness Week was celebrated during the month of September. During this time, the National Birth Defects Prevention Network (NBDPN) highlighted the importance of folic acid in preventing neural tube defects. Folic acid is a type of vitamin B that helps the brain and spinal cord to form properly. If taken before and during pregnancy in the form of supplements or food, it can reduce the risk of these birth defects. Ensuring adequate folic acid intake is essential for the health of both mothers and their babies. #InMyFolicAcidEra

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Sickle Spotlight

Sickle Cell Disease

September is Sickle Cell Awareness Month, dedicated to increasing understanding of sickle cell disease (SCD), a genetic condition that affects red blood cells. Sickle cell disease is the most common inherited blood disorder in the United States, and it primarily affects Americans of African and Hispanic descent. In Indiana, over 1700 Hoosiers are living with sickle cell disease.

The Newborn Screening Program, in partnership with Innovative Hematology, ensures early detection and follow up care for newborns. Recent FDA-approved gene therapies bring new hope for managing and potentially curing the disease. Indiana Department of Health and Innovative Hematology have also created the Indiana Sickle Cell Consortium (ISCC), bringing key stakeholders together to enhance care and advocacy for patients with SCD.

Additionally, we fund the Sickle SAFE program, which provides essential services and education for affected children and their families. To further support awareness and education, the department provides de-identified data to the Regenstrief Institute for their new Indiana Sickle Cell Dashboard, which presents information and statewide statistics about SCD. #SickleCellAwarenessMonth #GetToKnowSickleCell

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To **promote**, **protect**, and **improve** the health and safety of all Hoosiers

Indiana Department of Health

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