

Priding myself on having a "perfect" pregnancy and delivery, I was shocked when I learned my baby didn't pass his hearing test. I wrote down his story for all the "moms like me" and for those who care for these moms and their babies.



"Ryder's Story"

Being a nurse and a teacher, I loved learning about the development of my precious baby. I eagerly read everything I could find on natural childbirth, the history of birth, brain development and child development. With all this newfound knowledge I marveled at this tiny miracle of life unfolding itself and growing within me. In all my readings, never did I come across anything that mentioned newborn hearing screening or the possibility that some babies are born with a hearing loss.

After delivering my 10 pound baby boy naturally, I laid his warm, wet naked body on mine and was instantly bathed in a chemical whirlpool of love, elation, giddiness and pure euphoria. I was relieved when I counted ten toes and ten fingers. Everything looked great! He was perfect! Whew!

Later that afternoon after I dreamily spent the day nursing and cuddling with Ryder, my nurse took him for his newborn hearing screen. I laid there remembering my firstborn son having this done, and getting a little card that said both his ears had passed. I hadn't really paid much attention at the time.

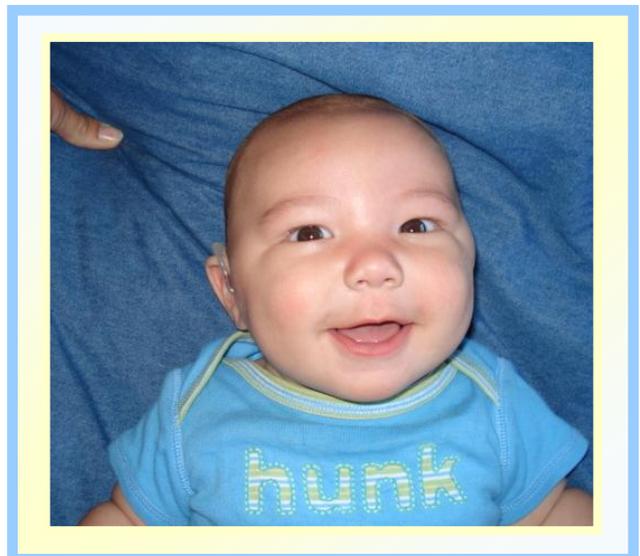
When they brought Ryder back and said he did not pass on either ear and would need to be re-tested, I was a little concerned but chalked it up to test error or fluid in his ears from being such a large baby. When they re-screened him one last time before we left and he still did not pass, I became a bit more concerned and apprehensive. No... there was no familial history of deafness or congenital hearing loss. No...Ryder did not fit into any of the at risk categories I read on the Idaho Sound Beginnings Referral form. What was going on?

Thankfully the discharge nurse was wonderful. She gave me the number of an office where *pediatric* audiologists perform diagnostic audiological evaluations on tiny infants. She educated me on the subject, gave me some brochures and reading materials, and strongly urged me to follow up on this in a *timely* manner.

Two weeks later when the audiologist gently told me my son had moderate to moderate-severe hearing loss in both ears, I was devastated.

Three weeks later it was the most wonderful feeling when my son was fit with his little hearing aids, and his father and I watched his face break into a huge smile as he clearly heard our voices and all the sounds of our words (he was then around *5 weeks of age*.)

What a difference this early intervention has made! Had Ryder not had an infant hearing test, a caring, informative nurse, and a pediatric audiologist trained in working with infants, this loss may have gone undiagnosed for 2 years or more! What I didn't know at the time is that "even deaf babies babble," and a baby with a moderate hearing loss, such as Ryder's, is able to respond to loud sounds and doorbells and even sometimes name calling.



Brain development in newborns is awe-inspiring! Since having Ryder I've learned that the latest research shows that the visual area of his brain probably would have, in time, taken over the auditory area which was waiting to be wired for sound.

This wiring for hearing couldn't happen without the stimulation provided by *all* the sounds of language and the world.

Babies cannot tell us they can't hear all the sounds of the world and language, so we must ensure early screening happens in order to ensure the best possible outcome and development of each child. These babies (almost one out of every 300 births) can reach their maximum potential if hearing loss is detected early.

Time heals almost everything, especially with a little help. Ryder is now a thriving one year old. He loves to listen and experiment and babble with his voice. He is a true blessing and his joy and zest for life is truly contagious!



Dear Parents and Caregivers,

Please make sure your baby has a hearing screening (and follow-up if needed) within the *first month of life*...it has made all the difference in my world and in Ryder's.

Best wishes,

Andrea Amestov, R.N.



Idaho Sound Beginnings – Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Program

Because

hearing loss is often undiagnosed through informal methods or the use of risk factors only.

hearing loss interferes with an infant's ability to learn the sounds of speech and language, which can interfere with later academic achievement and social-emotional development.

hearing loss is the #1 birth defect, over 50% of infants with hearing loss have no risk factors, and 90% are born to hearing parents with no previous family history of hearing loss.

--- Early diagnosis and follow-up can make all the difference.

Where can Idaho babies have their hearing screened?

All birthing hospitals in Idaho screen their babies hearing before discharge. Idaho's Infant Toddler Program (ITP) is also committed to providing newborn hearing screenings free of charge for all babies born out-of-hospital. ITP Regional contact numbers can be found by calling the Idaho CareLine at 2-1-1.

For more information, contact- **Idaho Sound Beginnings (208)334-0829**

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