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Iowa Newborn Screening Program Expands

New screen for immune deficiency disorder added

The Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) is expanding its newborn screening program to include screening for severe combined immune deficiency (SCID), a rare inherited disorder caused by a deficiency or absence of cells that help fight infections. SCID screening will begin as an "implementation pilot" to ensure that the screening process meets standards and can ensure that all babies are receiving the screen, and that any baby receiving an abnormal result would receive appropriate interventions.

If untreated, most infants with SCID die before their first birthday. The incidence of SCID is estimated to be one in 50,000 to 60,000 live births. Nearly 40,000 Iowa babies are screened shortly after birth through the newborn screening program. There are greater than 15 known genetic causes of SCID.

“Detection of SCID in the immediate newborn period, before the onset of the first severe infection, can save a baby’s life and improve the success of curing this otherwise life-threatening condition,” said Dr. Mary Beth Fasano, Medical Consultant for the Iowa SCID Newborn Screening Program. Testing for SCID and other immune deficiencies involves a process known as T-Cell Receptor Excision Circle (TREC) analysis. The addition of TREC analysis to the Iowa Newborn Screening Program is a significant advance in diagnosing and treating an otherwise fatal condition. The current collection practice for newborn screening won’t change; all samples will simply be run through an additional testing process at the State Hygienic Lab.
In 2013, the nation will celebrate the 50th anniversary of newborn screening. More than one million babies have been screened as part of Iowa’s Neonatal Metabolic Screening Program, which greatly impacts the lives of infants born in our state. With one small blood sample, more than 50 diseases can be detected. Most of these life-altering and life-threatening disorders are completely undetectable at birth without the newborn screen. For more information on Iowa’s Neonatal Metabolic Screening Program, visit www.idph.state.ia.us/genetics/neonatal_parent_page.asp.

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