



NEWBORN BLOODSPOT SCREENING

National implementation timeframes for new conditions

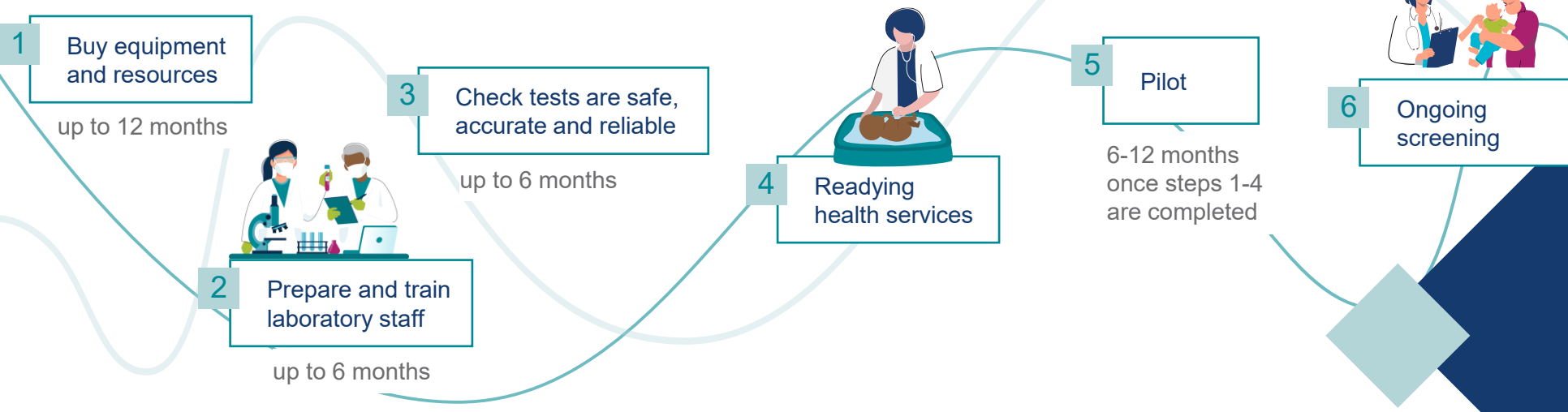
Australian newborn bloodspot screening (NBS) programs identify babies soon after birth who may be at risk of developing serious health conditions. The Australian Government is providing direct funding of \$68.6 million until 2028 to states and territories to support NBS program expansion and consistency of conditions screened nationally. New conditions are assessed through a [national decision-making pathway](#). Through this pathway, health ministers across Australia make a joint decision on whether to add the condition nationally. Once health ministers agree to add a new condition, states and territories begin to ready all elements of the program for screening.

This fact sheet describes the key steps required to support the safe and consistent expansion of newborn bloodspot screening after it is approved by health ministers across Australia. It describes how the Commonwealth and states and territories are working together to expand life-saving screening as quickly and safely as possible.



Implementation overview

Once a condition is agreed, states and territories work toward a 2-year implementation target. The steps outlined describe processes that may apply over the 2-year period. Where possible these steps occur at the same time, not one after the other, to enable timely implementation.





Australian Government

Department of Health, Disability and Ageing

NEWBORN BLOODSPOT

SCREENING

Implementation



Steps to implement a condition:

Each condition added to the programs is unique. To start screening a condition, states and territories assess what is required to get their programs ready.

The steps outlined describe processes that may apply over the 2-year period. For some conditions, new equipment or additional workforce training may be required; in other cases, existing systems can be adapted. Requirements will vary depending on the condition and the jurisdiction.

1

Buy equipment and resources

Laboratories will buy the right tools and supplies – such as technology, laboratory equipment, and testing materials. The purchasing and delivery of this highly specialised equipment and resources is a multi-step process. This usually takes up to 12 months but may be longer depending on the types of equipment required.

2

Prepare and train laboratory staff

Specialist laboratory staff are trained and/or hired to undertake new tests and interpret results. This training makes sure screening occurs in line with updated protocols and quality standards. This ensures families receive abnormal results in an accurate and timely way. It can take up to 6 months for laboratory staff to be trained to undertake new tests.

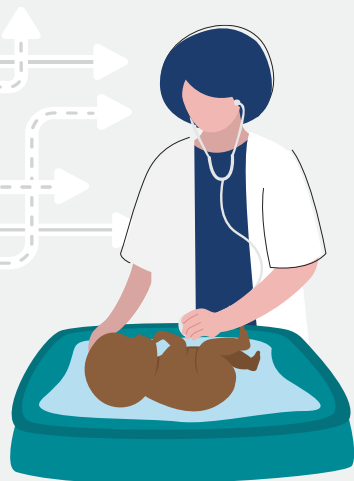
3

Check tests are safe, accurate and reliable

Before a condition is agreed to be added to NBS, all governments review evidence to ensure that the test used to identify the condition is safe, accurate and effective.

However, it is critical that new tests in a screening program are checked in practice, or in the laboratory, to ensure they perform in the way that they should before screening starts.

Each test goes through strict checks to make sure it works correctly with the laboratory's equipment. This series of checks will ensure that the results from screening are accurate and reliable. This process can take up to 6 months.



4 Ready to go health services

Adding a new condition to NBS programs will mean more babies are referred to specialists for diagnosis, treatment and ongoing care. It may mean that care pathways need to be revised or defined. Health services need to be ready – with the right clinical team and support for babies and their families to ensure high quality care.

5 Pilot

Pilots are conducted to check everything is working smoothly – from collecting the sample to referring families for treatment and/or support.

Care is also taken to ensure implementation of the new condition does not disrupt or delay screening for existing conditions.

During the pilot phase, the condition is tested as part of the program. Laboratories also undertake official accreditation to ensure their processes meet all necessary standards. This can take between 6 and 12 months and can only occur once steps 1 – 4 are completed.

During the pilot phase, if a baby has a positive screening result, the family will be notified for further follow-up tests and treatment as required. From this point, babies will start to benefit from early detection and care.



6 Ongoing screening

The condition is then formally part of the program. The condition, and the program, are monitored to ensure that families continue to receive high quality screening.

Together, these 6 steps mean that every new condition is introduced consistently and safely, to maintain the trust of families and communities in NBS programs.