

Q&A
En español

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What's New
for
Parents?
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NEW
Tried and True
Tips From You!
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- breathing (rate and effort)
- activity and muscle tone
- grimace response (medically known as "reflex irritability")
- appearance (skin coloration)

Doctors, [midwives](#), or nurses add these five factors together to calculate the Apgar score. Although 10 is the highest possible score, babies almost never receive it because the hands and feet of healthy newborns are usually still slightly bluish and not yet pink at 5 minutes after birth. (A baby has to have normal coloration all over - including pink hands and feet - to get the full score of 2 for appearance.)

Apgar Scoring			
Apgar Sign	2	1	0
Heart Rate (pulse)	Normal (above 100 beats per minute)	Below 100 beats per minute	Absent (no pulse)
Breathing (rate and effort)	Normal rate and effort	Slow or irregular breathing	Absent (no breathing)
Grimace (Responsiveness or "reflex irritability")	Pulls away, sneezes, or coughs with stimulation	Facial movement only (grimace) with stimulation	Absent (no response to stimulation)
Activity (muscle tone)	Active, spontaneous movement	Arms and legs flexed with little movement	No movement, "floppy" tone
Appearance (skin coloration)	Normal color all over (hands and feet are	Normal color (but hands and feet are	Bluish-gray or pale all over

	pink)	bluish)	
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A baby who scores a 7 or above on the test at 1 minute after birth is generally considered in good health. However, a lower score doesn't necessarily mean that your baby is unhealthy or abnormal. For example, a score between 4 and 6 at 1 minute indicates that your baby needs some special immediate care, such as oxygen to help him breathe or suctioning of his airways. A newborn with an Apgar score of less than 4 generally requires advanced medical care and emergency measures, like assisted breathing, administration of fluids or medications, and observation in a [neonatal intensive care unit](#) (NICU).

At 5 minutes after birth, the Apgar score is recalculated, and if your baby's score hasn't improved to 7 or greater, the doctors and nurses will continue any necessary medical care and will closely monitor your baby. Some babies are born with heart or lung conditions or other problems that require extra medical care; others just take a little longer than usual to adjust to life outside the womb. Most newborns with initial Apgar scores of less than 7 will eventually do just fine.

It's important for new parents to keep their baby's Apgar score in perspective. The test was designed to help health care providers assess a newborn's overall physical condition so that they could quickly determine whether the baby needed immediate medical care. It was **not** designed to predict a baby's long-term health, behavior, or outcome. Very few babies score a perfect 10, and perfectly healthy babies sometimes have a lower than usual score, especially in the first few moments of life.

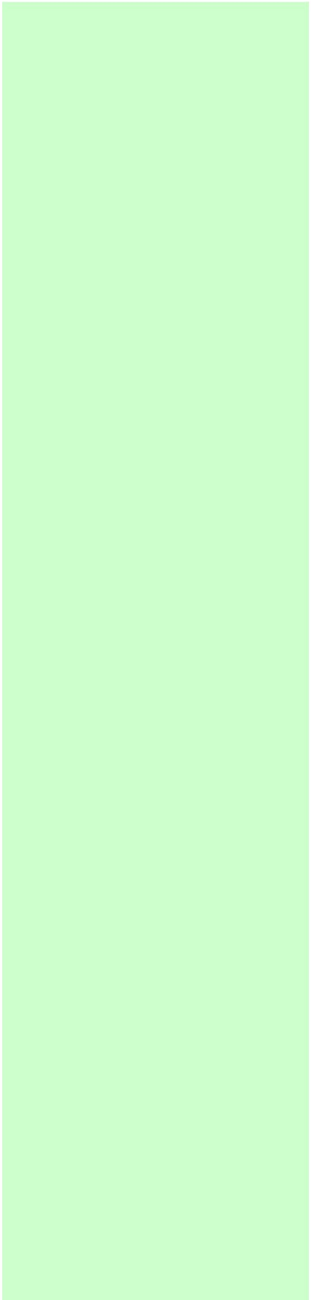
Keep in mind that a slightly low Apgar score (especially at 1 minute) is normal for some newborns, especially those born after a high-risk pregnancy, cesarean section, or a complicated labor and [delivery](#). Lower Apgar scores are also usually seen in healthy

[premature babies](#), who usually have less muscle tone than full-term newborns and who, in many cases, will require extra monitoring and breathing assistance because of their immature lungs. If your doctor or midwife is concerned about your baby's score, he or she will let you know. Your doctor or midwife will explain how the baby is doing, what might be causing any problems, and what care is being given - so try not to worry until then. Relax and enjoy the moment!

Reviewed by: [Kim Rutherford, MD](#)

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