



Beginning June 3, 2013, St. Elizabeth Healthcare's Family Birth Place will be screening all newborns for Congenital Heart Disease (CHD). CHD is the most common birth defect in newborns consisting of an abnormal structure to the heart, which creates an abnormal blood flow pattern. Some babies who are born with a heart defect appear healthy at first and can be sent home with their families before their heart defect is detected. It is estimated that about 300 infants with an unrecognized CHD are discharged each year from newborn nurseries in the United States. These babies are at risk of having serious complications within the first few days or weeks of life and often require emergency care.

Effective January 2014, the commonwealth of Kentucky has mandated that all newborns are screened. However, St. Elizabeth Healthcare understands the critical importance of this screening for our newborns; therefore, we will begin screening this month. We believe this is the right thing to do in order to provide the most precise care of our youngest patients.

The CHD screening will occur after the baby is 24 hours old because there are many changes in the circulatory system very early in life that can cause a false positive screen. This screening will help identify infants with CHD who may have low levels of oxygen in their blood, and will help diagnose critical CHD before the baby becomes symptomatic. The screening has the potential to proactively improve the prognosis and decrease the mortality and morbidity rate of infants who are affected that otherwise went untested.

St. Elizabeth Healthcare will be partnering with Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center (CCHMC) to administer these screenings. If additional testing is needed, CCHMC sonographers will be on-site at St. Elizabeth seven days a week to facilitate these tests for our newborns. All tests will immediately be electronically transmitted to CCHMC for reading and diagnosis. If additional tests are required for the newborn, then St. Elizabeth staff will coordinate the next steps with CCHMC and their specialists.