

[IMAGE]

5 Signs of a Healthy Baby

If you're a parent, whether a new or seasoned one, you've undoubtedly heard of the APGAR score, but chances are you have little or no idea what it really means beyond the fact that a high score is good news for your newly delivered baby, while a low score suggests your newborn may require more than standard medical attention in their first moments of life. The score, which was devised nearly 60 years ago by Dr. Virginia Apgar, evaluates five key signs of health upon delivery, with each one represented by a specific letter and assigned a score of 0-2, meaning a perfectly healthy infant scores 10 for the test. Here's what each letter stands for and what different scores indicate:

Appearance refers primarily to skin color. Pink body and extremities scores 2; blue all over scores 0 (*not* a good sign of health).

Pulse rate of at least 100 beats per minute scores a 2; pulse that is absent (another very bad sign) scores a 0.

Grimace is an evaluation of reflex irritability; if the newborn coughs, sneezes or pulls away when stimulated, that's a 2. No response to stimulation scores a 0.

Activity is assessed by muscle tone - active movement scores 2, while none scores 0.

Respiration (breathing) considered strong is awarded a score of 2; no breath scores a 0.

The APGAR test is performed one and five minutes after birth, and may be repeated thereafter if initial scores are low. In general, a total combined score of 7-10 is considered normal, 4-6 is fairly low, while any score below 3 is critically low. Bear in mind that a low score at one minute which improves at five minutes may not be indicative of a health issue, but a consistently low score definitely requires medical attention.

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