

Nursing Tip

To elicit a red reflex, place the infant in a dark room. In an alert state, many newborns open their eyes in a supported sitting position.

Ears

The ears are examined for position, structure, and auditory function. The top of the pinna should lie in a horizontal plane to the outer canthus of the eye. The pinna is often flattened against the side of the head from pressure in utero. An otoscopic examination may be difficult to perform if the canals are filled with vernix caseosa and amniotic fluid, making visualization of the tympanic membrane difficult.

Auditory ability is tested by a number of objective hearing tests. Making a loud noise close to the infant's head may or may not elicit a response; the lack of a response, however, is not a definite indication of hearing loss. The startle reflex ([Table 7-2](#)) may be observed when there is a sudden loud noise near the infant or the bassinet is accidentally bumped, but this often depends on the infant's state at the time.

TABLE 7-2
Assessment of Reflexes in the Newborn

Reflexes	Expected Behavioral Responses
Localized	
<i>Eyes</i>	
Blinking or corneal	Infant blinks at sudden appearance of a bright light or at approach of an object toward cornea; persists throughout life.
Pupillary	Pupil constricts when a bright light shines toward it; persists throughout life.
Doll's eye	As head is moved slowly to right or left, eyes lag behind and do not immediately adjust to new position of head; disappears as fixation develops; if persists, indicates neurologic damage.
<i>Nose</i>	
Sneeze	Sneezing is a spontaneous response of nasal passages to irritation or obstruction; persists throughout life.
Glabellar	Tapping briskly on glabella (bridge of nose) causes eyes to close tightly.
<i>Mouth and Throat</i>	
Sucking	Infant begins strong sucking movements of circumoral area in response to stimulation; persists throughout infancy even without stimulation, such as during sleep.
Gag	Stimulation of posterior pharynx by food, suction, or passage of a tube causes infant to gag; persists throughout life.
Rooting	Touching or stroking the cheek alongside of mouth causes infant to turn head