

Media Release

Hon Jacinta Allan MP
Premier



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NATIONAL FIRST TEST FOR FREE FOR VICTORIA'S KIDS

Victorian newborns will be the first in Australia to get free screening for a rare but serious health condition.

This means babies will get the lifesaving treatment and support they need sooner, giving parents one less thing to worry about.

Labor is making healthcare cheaper and easier to access for families, when they need it.

Premier Jacinta Allan and Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas today visited the Victorian Clinical Genetics Services (VCGS) to announce the addition of sickle-cell disease to the Newborn Bloodspot Screening Program. Sickle-cell disease is an inherited blood disorder that affects haemoglobin.

Commonly referred to as the 'heel prick test', the latest addition to the program will now see Victorian babies tested for 35 conditions.

The test is offered to parents of all newborns within their first 72 hours of life, at no cost.

If untreated, it can cause severe health complications, including acute pain, anaemia, stroke, infections and permanent organ damage.

While the illness only affects a small percentage of Australia's population, its prevalence is increasing. Through screening, affected babies will be detected and treated early to prevent complications.

Treatment focuses on alleviating symptoms and preventing more serious and potentially life-threatening health complications – improving quality of life and reducing families' long-term healthcare costs.

Newborn bloodspot screening began in Victoria in 1966, with more than 3.6 million babies screened to date – with one in 1,000 found to have a rare, but serious condition.

In 2025, more than 74,000 Victorian newborns were screened under the newborn bloodspot screening program.

The Allan Labor Government is continuing to expand the program adding further rare conditions recently including congenital adrenal hyperplasia, spinal muscular atrophy, and severe combined immunodeficiency.

Quotes attributable to Premier Jacinta Allan

"We're adding sickle-cell disease to the newborn screening program because our littlest Victorians deserve the best possible start to life."

"No family wants to think about having a child who is sick – but with the free heel prick test, parents can have peace of mind in those stressful early days with a new bub."

Quote attributable to Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas

"We are expanding the newborn bloodspot screening program so that all Victorian babies living with a rare health disorder can get the care they need sooner."