

THE APGAR
SCORE

Apgar score was devised in 1952 by the eponymous Dr. Virginia Apgar as a simple and repeatable method to quickly and summarily assess the health of newborn children immediately after birth. Apgar was an anesthesiologist who developed the score in order to ascertain the effects of obstetric anesthesia on babies.

This score is determined by evaluating the newborn baby on five simple criteria, that are summarized using words chosen to form a *backronym* (Appearance, Pulse, Grimace, Activity, Respiration.)

APGAR is a quick test performed at 1 and 5 minutes after birth: the 1-minute score determines how well the baby tolerated the birthing process, the 5-minute score assesses how well the newborn is adapting to the new environment.

The test is performed by a doctor, midwife, or nurse; the health care provider will examine the baby's:

- breathing effort;
- heart rate;
- muscle tone;
- reflexes;
- skin color.

Each category is scored with 0, 1, or 2, depending on the observed condition. The rating is based on a total score of 1 to 10, with 10 suggesting the healthiest infant.

This test is performed since it is a screening tool to determine whether a newborn needs medical attention to stabilize the heart or breathing function.

A resulting score of 8 or 9 is normal and indicates the newborn is in good condition. A score of 10 is very unusual,

since almost all newborns lose 1 point for blue hands and feet, which is normal for the transitional phase after birth.

Any score lower than 8 indicates the child needs assistance. Scores below 5 indicate that the infant needs immediate assistance in adjusting to his or her new environment. However, a child who has a low score at 1 minute and a normal score at 5 minutes should not have any long-term problems. The APGAR is a very safe test, as it has no risks.

[Adapted from: MedlinePlus®, a service of the U.S. National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health (2009).]

Answer the following questions.

- A) Which are the five criteria taken into exam?
B) Why is the APGAR test performed?