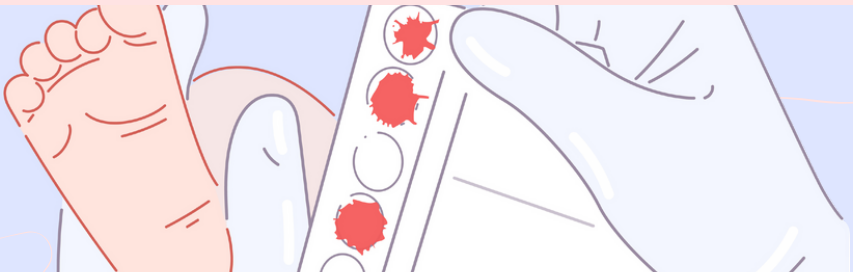
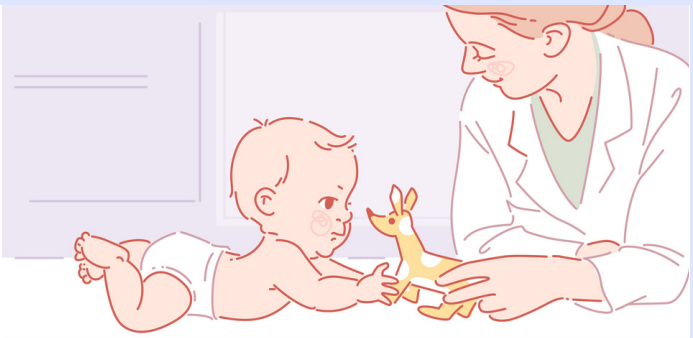
HIQA PROVIDES ADVICE ON ADDING CONDITION TO HEEL PRICK TEST

HIQA has provided advice on the addition of spinal muscular atrophy (SMA) to the National Newborn Bloodspot Screening Programme.



Newborn bloodspot screening, known as 'the heel prick test', happens within the first 72 to 120 hours of life.

SMA is a rare, genetic condition associated with permanent damage to the motor nerves causing them to become weaker over time. While SMA can result in serious disability or death, some people have milder symptoms with onset later in childhood or as an adult.



New drug treatments have become available for SMA. A potential benefit of screening is that babies with SMA can be identified and treated sooner, preventing or reducing muscle damage. HIQA's review found that several countries have implemented or are in the process of implementing screening for SMA.

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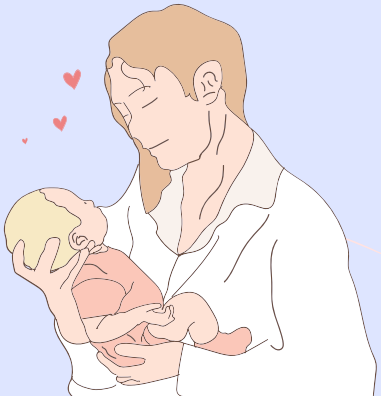

It is estimated that introducing screening for SMA may cost the HSE in the region of €17.7 million over the first five years. The majority of expenditure will be associated with the cost of drug treatment.

It is expected that, on average, around seven children with SMA will be identified through the programme each year.

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