



# Neonatal Therapy Certification Examination Manual

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This Exam Manual outlines the processes used by the Neonatal Therapy Certification Board® (NTCB®) to develop, administer, score, and report the Neonatal Therapy Certification® examination. The information contained herein is intended to ensure that the examination is administered in a standardized, secure, and equitable manner and that candidates are informed of examination-related procedures, requirements, and expectations. This manual addresses examination-specific practices, including examination content, registration and scheduling, test center procedures, accommodations, security, scoring, results notification, and appeals.

Information related to initial certification eligibility and candidate responsibilities can be found in the NTCB Candidate Handbook. Requirements and procedures related to maintenance of certification, including recertification pathways and certification status options, are documented in the NTCB Recertification Handbook.

### Development of the Neonatal Therapy Certification Examination

Examination content is based on a formal practice analysis that defines the tasks, knowledge, and skills required for competent neonatal therapy practice. The exam is developed through a rigorous process led by expert neonatal therapists and reviewed by a multidisciplinary team of subject matter experts (SMEs). All items are evidence-based, reviewed for clarity and accuracy, and removed if consensus cannot be reached.

Questions are pilot tested and evaluated using psychometric methods, including biserial analysis, to select final exam items. A criterion-referenced standard-setting process establishes the passing score, and ongoing psychometric review supports continuous quality improvement. The NTCB regularly maintains and updates the item pool, recruits certified neonatal therapists (CNT®) SMEs for ongoing item development, and launches a new generation of the exam approximately every five to six years to reflect current evidence-based practice.

### Content of Examination

The exam covers areas described in NANT's "Neonatal Therapy Core Scope of Practice Document", including:

- Family dynamics
- Fetal development
- High-risk infant outcomes
- Interventions in the NICU that are supported by evidence
- Maternal risk factors and complications
- Medical terminology, including pathologies specific to the NICU infant, and medical procedures
- Models of care and theory in the NICU
- Musculoskeletal, posture and alignment, and positioning
- Neurobehavioral development and reflex development
- NICU environment and culture

- Oral motor and feeding development, including basic feeding and swallowing, feeding products, and current models of care regarding feeding
- Pain assessment and management
- Sleep, states of arousal, and state transition
- Standardized assessments

### Examination Administration and Delivery

The certification examination is delivered using a computer-based testing format. Examinations are administered at authorized Pearson VUE test centers under standardized conditions, including identity verification, secure proctoring, and controlled testing environments. The mode of delivery is applied consistently to all candidates and is designed to ensure examination security, fairness, and reliability. The computer-based format supports the implementation of approved testing accommodations in compliance with applicable laws while maintaining the integrity of the examination.

### Testing Agency

The NTCB contracts with [Pearson VUE](#) testing centers. Pearson VUE is part of Pearson, the world's largest learning company with more than 35,000 employees working across the globe to reliably deliver the Neonatal Therapy Certification Exam. Pearson VUE is headquartered in suburban Minneapolis, Minnesota, with regional offices in the United States, the United Kingdom, Dubai, Australia, India, Japan, and China. Pearson VUE administers the exam at testing centers located in every major metropolitan area of the United States, as well as in many countries. Once a candidate is eligible to take the exam, a testing center can be found by accessing the NTCB webpage using this link: <https://www.pearsonvue.com/us/en/ntncb.html>

### Statement of Nondiscrimination

NTCB and Pearson VUE do not discriminate among candidates on the basis of age, gender, race, color, religion, national origin, disability, marital status, or any other protected characteristic.

### Exam Registration

Upon notification of eligibility to take the exam, the candidate will receive a unique identification number and instructions for paying the examination fee. Within 10 days of paying the exam fee, the candidate will receive a direct message from Pearson VUE with instructions on how to schedule the examination. Certification applicants have six months from the date of notification of eligibility to take the Neonatal Therapy Certification Examination.

Candidates must complete the examination demographics in full, using their name *exactly* as it appears on their current government-issued photo ID (e.g., driver's license or passport).

## Examination Administration

The Neonatal Therapy Certification Examination is offered by computer at approximately 230 Pearson VUE network of test centers located throughout the United States and more than 20 countries. Candidates can schedule their exam in a location that is convenient to them, and in most cases, within a short distance from the applicant's home. If you would like to search for testing centers near you, please visit: <https://www.pearsonvue.com/us/en/ntncb.html>

## Biometric Verification

Prior to taking the exam, an applicant must consent to biometric verification procedures determined by the Pearson testing center to ensure the integrity of the testing process.

- *Verification Methods*
  - Multiple forms of identification
  - Digital photographs
  - Electronic signatures
  - Facial comparison
  - Palm vein scanning
  
- *Consent Process*
  - During the scheduling process, an applicant must consent to all forms of verification, including those not used at the chosen center.
  - Failure to consent online will prevent scheduling the exam and result in forfeiture of the exam fee.
  - Refusal of verification at the testing center (even though consent was given online during scheduling) will result in termination of the exam, and the exam fee will be forfeited.
  
- *Palm Vein Scanning Specifics*
  - If a testing center without palm vein scanning is preferred, the NTCB must be notified at least 90 days prior to the exam eligibility date ending.
  - The NTCB can provide a list of centers in your geographic area (which may not be in your state) that do not use palm vein scanning technology.
  - All forms of verification consent will still be required at scheduling, including palm vein scans, even if it's not used at that specific testing center.
  
- *Refunds*
  - A refund will be issued if an applicant is unwilling to comply with any of the biometric verification requirements and notifies the NTCB at least 90 days prior to the exam eligibility date ending.
  - No refund will be issued if any biometric verification requirement is refused and the NTCB is not notified at least 90 days prior to the scheduled exam.
  - No refund will be issued if a testing center is chosen that requires palm vein scanning, but the applicant refuses the scan upon arrival.

## Testing Accommodations for Candidates with Disabilities

The NTCB is committed to providing equitable access to the certification examination for all qualified candidates. In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), as amended, and applicable state and federal laws, reasonable testing accommodations are provided to candidates with documented disabilities to ensure that the examination measures competence rather than disability, while maintaining the integrity and security of the examination.

The NTCB administers the certification examination in partnership with Pearson VUE and ensures that no qualified candidate is denied the opportunity to test solely on the basis of a documented disability. Accommodations are determined through an individualized review process and are granted when documentation supports a functional limitation that substantially limits one or more major life activities relevant to test taking.

Candidates requesting testing accommodations must submit a written request to [info@ntnbc.com](mailto:info@ntnbc.com), including appropriate and current supporting documentation from a qualified professional that substantiates the need for the requested accommodation(s). Requests must be received at least 45 calendar days prior to the desired examination date to allow adequate time for review and coordination with the testing vendor.

All accommodation requests are reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Candidates will be notified in writing of the determination prior to scheduling or sitting for the examination. Approved accommodations are provided at no additional cost to the candidate and are implemented in a manner that preserves the fairness, standardization, and security of the examination.

## Reschedule and Cancellation Policy

To reschedule the exam, please contact Pearson VUE at least 72 hours prior to the scheduled appointment. Rescheduling or canceling an exam less than 72 hours prior to the scheduled time, or missing the exam, will result in forfeiture of all exam fees.

## Missed Appointments and Forfeitures

A candidate risks forfeit of the paid examination registration fees under the following circumstances:

- The candidate wishes to reschedule an examination but fails to contact Pearson VUE at least 72 hours prior to the scheduled testing session.
- The candidate wishes to reschedule the exam a second time.
- The candidate appears more than 15 minutes late for an examination.
- The candidate fails to report for an examination appointment.

## Inclement Weather or Other Emergency

In the event of inclement weather or unforeseen emergency on the day of examination, Pearson VUE will determine whether circumstances warrant cancellation and the subsequent rescheduling of an examination. If a test center experiences a delay or cancellation, Pearson

VUE will notify the test taker directly by phone or email and offer opportunities to reschedule the test.

### Admission Requirements

Please arrive at the test center at least 30 minutes prior to your scheduled appointment to complete check-in. Two original forms of personal identification will be required. Arrival more than 15 minutes after the scheduled appointment time may result in refused admission, and the exam fee is non-refundable.

### Identification

The identity of the tester will be carefully verified before exam delivery, and each individual is subject to continuous monitoring while in the examination center.

Two original (no photocopies) and valid (not expired) forms of identification are required: one primary form (government-issued with name, photo, and signature) and one secondary form (with name and signature or name and recent recognizable photo). The first and last name used to register must match exactly the first and last name on the ID that is presented on test day. All identification must be issued by the country in which you are testing. An International Travel Passport from the country of citizenship may be permissible, along with secondary identification. Contact Pearson VUE Customer Service at [www.pearsonvue.com/contact](http://www.pearsonvue.com/contact) with any questions or concerns regarding approved identification. To view the full Pearson VUE policy, including any additional allowances to this policy, please visit <http://www.pearsonvue.com/policies/1S.pdf>.

Candidates must have proper identification to gain admission to the testing center. Failure to provide appropriate identification at the time of the examination is considered a “missed” appointment. There will be no refund of the examination fee.

At the testing carrel, the candidate's identification number will be required, which will be provided by the NTCB upon approval of the application and in all subsequent communications. A personal photograph will be taken before the examination begins, will remain on the screen throughout the session, and will be included on the score report.

### Security

All test centers will provide a quiet, distraction-free environment to encourage test-takers to perform at their peak. The extensive test center network has quality monitoring and integrity shopper programs to carefully oversee each center. Each center will provide a sufficient threshold of quality and security, and is carefully managed to maintain that threshold.

The following security procedures apply during the examination:

- No cameras, tape recorders, pagers, or electronic devices are allowed in the testing room. Possession of a cellular phone, smartphone, or other devices is strictly prohibited and will result in dismissal from the examination.
- No calculators are allowed, nor is one required for the examination.
- No guests, visitors, or family members are allowed in the testing room or reception areas.
- Candidates may be subjected to a metal detection scan upon entering the examination

- room.
- No study materials or references are permitted into the testing center.
  - Candidates may not share information from the exam with anyone.

### Personal Belongings

No personal items, valuables, or weapons are allowed at the testing center. Only wallets and keys are permitted. Large coats and jackets must be left outside the testing room. A soft locker will be available to store your wallet and/or keys. The proctor will lock the soft locker prior to the exam, and access to those items are not allowed until after the examination is completed. The following items are not allowed in the testing room, except when securely stored in the soft locker: watches, hats, wallets, and keys.

Once personal belongings are placed in the soft locker, any pockets must be shown to be empty. If other or larger personal items are brought that do not fit in the soft locker, the test taker will not be permitted to take the test. The site will not store or be responsible for additional personal belongings.

If any personal items are observed or heard (such as a phone or alarm) in the testing room after the examination has started, the test will be dismissed, and the exam fee will be forfeited.

### Examination Restrictions

- Pencils will be provided during check-in.
- One piece of scratch paper will be provided to use during the examination, unless noted on the sign-in roster for a particular candidate. The paper must be returned to the proctor upon completion of the testing.
- No documents or notes of any kind may be removed from the testing center.
- No questions concerning the content of the examination may be asked during the examination.
- Eating, drinking, or smoking is not permitted in the testing center.
- A break is permitted at any time, but additional time is not provided.
- No study materials are permitted in the testing area.

### Misconduct

The following conduct during the examination will result in the test being dismissed, scores not being reported, and examination fees not being refunded. Examples of misconduct are:

- Any abusive or otherwise uncooperative disturbance
- Display and/or use of electronic communications devices such as pagers or phones
- Talking or participating in a conversation with other examination candidates
- Give or receive help, or are suspected of doing so
- Leaving the testing center during the exam administration
- Attempting to record examination questions or taking notes
- Attempting to take the examination for someone else
- Are observed with personal belongings
- Are observed with unauthorized notes, books, or other aids

### Timed Examination

Before beginning, instructions for taking the examination are provided on the screen. The examination contains 90–100 questions. Two hours are allotted to complete the examination.

Be sure to answer each question before finishing the examination. There is no penalty for guessing. When all questions have been answered, review the answers before submitting the final submission. Once the exam is finished and you exit the testing room, you will not be able to re-enter the exam. If any technical issues arise during the test at any time, the Pearson VUE proctor is available to assist. Please ask questions and report any problems promptly.

### After Examination Completion

After completing the examination, candidates are asked to complete a brief evaluation of their examination experience. A written document from the proctor will be provided as proof that the test was taken and will include the preliminary pass/fail result along with the raw score. Although the examination consists of 90–100 questions, some questions may be pretest/pilot questions and will not be used in the final determination of pass/fail. An official notification from NTCB regarding performance on the examination will also be emailed within two weeks of the testing date. Scores are not reported over the telephone or by facsimile.

### Examination Score

The qualifying score for passing or failing the exam is 80% or 72 out of 90. Scores at or above 80.0% (72/90) are considered passing, and scores below 80.0% (<72/90) are considered failing.

### Passing the Examination

Once the examination has been passed, the CNT designation can be used immediately upon notification. This credential may be used for a period of five years from the date of this notification before recertification is required.

### Retesting

Candidates who do not pass the exam are provided with additional category-based feedback on their performance within two weeks of the testing date to guide future study if desired. Applicants who choose to retake the exam may schedule a retake no earlier than 60 days after their first test date and must retake the exam within one year of their first test date. If the exam is failed a second time, it is required to wait a minimum of one year before reapplying for certification, allowing candidates time to gain more experience and knowledge in the field. The entire application and testing process will need to be re-completed.

### Exam Appeals

Applicants who receive a non-passing score on the certification examination have the right to

request a hand-scored review of their examination. Requests must be submitted in writing to the NTCB within 14 calendar days of receipt of the examination score. The request must clearly state the basis for the appeal. The NTCB will complete the review and notify the applicant in writing of the outcome within 60 calendar days of receipt of the appeal request.

Due to the confidential and secure nature of the certification examination, candidates may be provided with general information about score results and challenging content areas; however, the specific content of examination items will not be disclosed. Examination appeals are limited to verification of score accuracy. The results of the hand-scored review are final.

### Scores Canceled by NTCB or Pearson VUE

NTCB is responsible for the integrity of the scores it reports. On occasion, occurrences such as computer malfunction or misconduct by a candidate may cause a score to be suspect. NTCB is committed to rectifying such discrepancies as expeditiously as possible. NTCB may void examination results if, upon investigation, a violation of its regulations is discovered.

### Confidentiality

Information about candidates for testing and their examination results is considered confidential. A list of certified applicants will be available on the NTCB website. Information about applicants who have not passed the exam will be shared only with the applicant and will not be available to others. The NTCB is committed to a continuous improvement process, and ongoing psychometric testing will be conducted to evaluate test questions and applicant factors that contribute to success or failure. Studies and reports related to improving the quality of the process will not contain any identifiable information about the candidate, unless the candidate has authorized its disclosure. Information on candidates or certificate holders will not be sold to any third party.

### Copyrighted Examination Questions

All examination questions are the copyrighted property of NTCB. It is forbidden under federal copyright law to copy, reproduce, record, distribute, display, or share these examination questions by any means, in whole or in part. Doing so may result in civil and criminal penalties.

### Sample Examination Questions

Examination questions are multiple-choice style with four answer options. Read the question carefully and choose the option that best answers the question. Below are sample examination questions to demonstrate the format and style. Explanations for correct answers are provided for reference after the sample questions. Rationales are not provided during the examination.

1. In taking an infant out of their bed for therapy at 32 weeks postmenstrual age, which of the following issues should be considered to ensure safety during therapy?

- A. The infant's ability to regulate their temperature.
  - B. Whether the infant can maintain the head in midline.
  - C. Whether the infant can maintain flexion of extremities.
  - D. Whether the infant has been off a ventilator for 48 hours.
2. With developmental care provision for an infant who needs a new intravenous (IV) line, the neonatal therapist should recommend the following sequence:
- A. Complete routine cares and then proceed to insert the IV.
  - B. Insert the IV, and then follow with a diaper change and routine care.
  - C. Have parent hold the baby, insert the IV, and start therapy session.
  - D. Insert the IV, and follow with sucrose to decrease pain.

The following case scenario is used in questions 3-5:

Susie was born at 33 weeks gestation with tracheal-esophageal fistula and esophageal atresia. She had surgical repair on day of life 3. She was extubated from conventional ventilation at day of life 5. She is supported by high flow nasal cannula at 4 liters of flow and 30% FiO<sub>2</sub>. She has an oral jejunal tube for small drip feedings. She is one week old today.

3. What is Susie's postmenstrual age?
- A. 1 week
  - B. 33 weeks
  - C. 34 weeks
  - D. 35 weeks
4. What are the indications for neonatal therapy for Susie?
- A. Oral motor dysfunction, motor dysfunction, potential swallowing dysfunction, breathing difficulties, and history of intubation.
  - B. Prematurity, limited positioning post-surgery, ongoing noxious sensory input, and potential swallowing dysfunction.
  - C. Neonatal therapy is not indicated for Susie because it can complicate post-operative recovery.
  - D. Prematurity only, as infant's oral and breathing issues were addressed and corrected by surgery.
5. What therapy services will most likely be needed for follow up post-discharge for this infant?

- A. NICU follow-up clinic, early intervention services to include speech and motor therapy, and feeding clinic.
- B. Speech therapy in surgery follow up clinic only.
- C. No therapy follow up is indicated, as long as the infant is able to complete all feedings by mouth at discharge.
- D. Outpatient occupational therapy services only.

### Correct answers and rationales

#### Question 1:

Correct answer: A is the correct answer as ability to regulate temperature would be a key consideration for infant safety when taking them out of their bed. B and C are incorrect because the infant may not be able to perform these two tasks, but this does not affect the safety of therapy. D is incorrect because time off the ventilator is not a guideline to determine therapeutic safety.

#### Question 2:

Correct answer: A is the correct answer because in order to decrease infant stress, the least noxious stimuli in the caregiving cluster should be introduced first, and the most noxious stimuli should be introduced last. B, C and D are incorrect because the most noxious stimulus is not introduced last. Also, in B and C, IV insertion can affect infant response to subsequent tactile handling. Finally, D is also incorrect because sucrose should be administered prior to the procedure to optimize pain control, not after the procedure.

#### Question 3:

Correct answer: C. Postmenstrual age is defined as the gestational age plus the chronological age. Answer A is the chronological age, answer B is the gestational age, and answer D is not relevant to the scenario.

#### Question 4:

Correct answer: B. The infant has all of the listed reasons identified by the American Academy of Pediatrics and the National Association of Neonatal Nurses to indicate therapy involvement to improve outcomes. A is incorrect because it is not noted that the infant has oral motor dysfunction or motor dysfunction, and this list does not include significant items such as prematurity. C is incorrect because prematurity, pain associated with current and past medical interventions, swallowing disorder, and ongoing noxious sensory input all indicate the need for therapy intervention. D is incorrect because documented outcomes of tracheal-esophageal fistula and esophageal atresia repair are noted to have ongoing swallowing and postural difficulties that can affect long term development.

#### Question 5:

Correct answer: A. Infants with tracheal-esophageal fistula (TEF) and esophageal atresia (EA) typically demonstrate ongoing swallowing difficulties and medical interventions for esophageal motility requiring feeding therapy. This infant's prematurity plus potentially long NICU hospitalization, as well as postural limitations sometimes associated with EA/TEF repair, warrant NICU follow-up and early intervention evaluation. B is incorrect because most infants who have

TEF and EA benefit from speech therapy services; however, their ongoing sensory/feeding needs and postural needs cannot be addressed by speech therapy alone. C is incorrect because most infants who have TEF and EA benefit from speech therapy services addressing transitioning to solid foods, even when they swallow liquids with ease. D is incorrect because most infants who have TEF and EA benefit from speech therapy services addressing transitioning to solid foods, even when they swallow liquids with ease, and most likely will also need OT to address any ongoing sensory needs associated with prematurity and noxious sensory exposure.

### Exam Preparation Tips

1. Review the reference list provided after completion of the application. Take NICU-related continuing education courses and/or review material related to neonatal therapy.
2. After the application fee is paid, a candidate will gain access to a study guide in the “examination” section of the NTCB portal. This document contains self-assessment tools and more sample questions. Use the guide to direct study. Note, you must be logged in to access the guide.
3. Plan ahead and pace yourself. Make a schedule that helps to organize your study sessions and stick to it.
4. Don’t feel like you have to block large chunks of time for each study session. Studying for shorter periods but more frequently may be more effective in terms of adhering to a schedule, and it can also help you retain information more effectively.
5. Select an environment without distractions to focus on your studying.
6. Allow breaks in studying as needed, but if you feel like you are taking too many breaks, today may not be a good day for studying. It is acceptable to modify your schedule as long as you continue to make progress.
7. Start with one or two more comfortable topics to reinforce what you know and to build confidence, and then move to a more challenging topic.
8. Use the resource list to help expand your knowledge in areas that are less familiar to you.
9. Focus on relevant clinical knowledge, things every experienced neonatal therapist should know, rather than random facts.
10. While studying, think of possible questions related to the material. What are the nuggets of information that are critical in the material? If you had to check if someone knows this topic, what would you ask them?
11. Create flashcards with important topics or write questions related to the material – then revisit them after a few weeks and see if you can answer them.
12. Get support from others who are preparing for the exam! Group studying can help reinforce information through quizzing one another and sharing knowledge. You can also help keep each other on track.
13. Arrive early at the testing center to avoid feeling rushed. Get a full night’s sleep the night before so you are rested and focused.
14. Eat something before you come. No food or drink is allowed at the testing center.