



GROUP B STREP IN PREGNANCY

1. What is Group B Strep (GBS)?

GBS is one of many common bacteria that live in the human body without causing harm in healthy people. GBS develops in the intestine from time to time, so sometimes it is present and sometimes it is not. GBS can be found in the intestine, rectum, and vagina in about 2 out of every 10 pregnant women near the time of birth. GBS is NOT a sexually transmitted disease, and it does not cause discharge, itching or other symptoms.

2. How does GBS cause infection?

At the time of birth babies are exposed to the GBS bacteria if it is present in the vagina, which can result in pneumonia or a blood infection. Full term babies that are born to mothers who carry GBS in the vagina at the time of birth, have a 1 in 200 chance of getting sick from GBS during the first few days after being born. Occasionally, moms can get a postpartum infection in the uterus also.

3. How do you know if you have GBS?

Three to five weeks before your due date, during a regular prenatal visit, your practitioner will collect a sample by touching the inner part of your vagina and just outside the anus with a sterile Q-tip. If GBS grows in the culture that is sent to the lab from that Q-tip sample, a note will be made in your chart and you will be notified so you can share this information when you go into labor.

4. How can infection from GBS be prevented?

If your GBS culture is positive within the 5 weeks before you give birth, your practitioner will recommend that you receive antibiotics during labor. GBS is very sensitive to antibiotics and is easily removed from the vagina. A few intravenous doses given up to four hours before birth almost always prevents your baby from picking up the bacteria during the birth. It is important to remember that GBS is typically not harmful to you or your baby before you are in labor. to page 2



5. Do you have to wait for labor to take the antibiotics?

Although GBS is easy to remove from the vagina, it is not easy to remove from the intestine where it lives normally and without harm to you. While GBS is not dangerous to you or your baby before birth, if you take antibiotics before you are in labor, GBS will return to the vagina from the intestine, as soon as you stop taking the medication. Therefore, it is best to take antibiotics during labor when it can best help you and your baby. The one exception is that occasionally, GBS can cause a urinary tract infection during pregnancy. If you get a urinary tract infection, it should be treated at the time it is diagnosed and then you should receive antibiotics again when you are in labor.

6. How will we know if your baby is infected?

Babies who get sick from infection with GBS almost always do so in the first 24 hours after birth. Symptoms include difficult breathing (including grunting or having poor color), problems maintaining temperature, or extreme sleepiness that interferes with nursing. Babies who develop GBS infection will be given IV antibiotics.

