

Group B Streptococcus (GBS)

What is Group B Streptococcus (GBS)?

GBS is a normal bacteria that can be found in the rectum and vagina of many women. It is not sexually transmitted and does not usually make healthy women sick, but it can cause minor bladder infections. One in four women who are pregnant test positive for GBS.

Why is GBS important?

GBS is important because for every 1000 GBS positive mothers, one or two babies will become infected and need treatment.

How do I know if I have GBS and what is the treatment?

You will be tested for GBS between 35-37 weeks of pregnancy at your regular clinic visit. A sample from your vaginal and rectal areas will be collected on a cotton swab and will be sent to the lab for testing. If you test positive for the GBS bacteria you will need to be treated during labor with an antibiotic (Penicillin) through an IV. This will reduce the chance that your baby will become infected during his or her delivery. If you are allergic to Penicillin, you will receive another antibiotic. You will not need treatment for GBS after the birth of your baby because it's a normal bacteria in adults.

What will happen if I am not tested for GBS during my pregnancy? Will I still need treatment?

You will be treated only if you have risk factors. These risk factors include:

- Previous infant with GBS infection
- GBS urine infection in this pregnancy
- Breaking of the bag of waters for 18 or more hours
- Premature labor (before 37 weeks)
- Increased temperature during labor

What if I am having a planned cesarean section?

You will still be tested for GBS at 35-37 weeks and only receive treatment if you experience labor or ruptured membranes prior to your cesarean section.

Do I need to do anything special when I go into labor?

Call your health care Labor and Delivery provider if your water breaks or contractions start, and let him or her know that you are positive for the GBS bacteria. Your prenatal record will be available in Labor and Delivery but when you check in you should also tell your labor nurse know that you are GBS positive.

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Will my baby and I be able to go home before 48 hours?

You may be able to go home before 48 hours if you were treated with at least 2 doses of Penicillin before your delivery and your baby was full term. If you were treated with a different antibiotic, you may be asked to stay an extra day so that your baby can be watched for signs of infection.

When I go home, is there anything I need to watch for in my baby?

Over 90% of infants who develop GBS infection do so in the first 24 hours after delivery. However, the first week that you and your baby are home, you should watch for signs of infection. Fever is the most important sign of problems. If your baby's temperature is 100°F or 38.4°C or higher, call your baby's health care provider right away. Also call if your baby has any of the following:

- Excessive sleepiness
- Fussiness
- Trouble breathing
- Refuses two feedings in a row

When you see your baby's health care provider for the first time remember to tell him or her that you were GBS positive during your pregnancy.

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