

Group B Strep

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About 1 in 4 adults carries the bacteria known as group B strep (GBS). Found in the vagina, lower intestine or both, it usually causes no symptoms and does not harm healthy adults.

But it can sometimes harm newborns because their immune systems are not fully mature. A pregnant woman with GBS can pass the bacteria to her baby during childbirth.

About 1 in 200 babies gets sick as a result of GBS if the mothers are not treated with antibiotics during labor. Only 1 in 4,000 babies gets sick from GBS after birth if the mothers are treated during labor.

Group B strep can be a life-threatening infection to an infected baby.

What to Do During Pregnancy and Labor

Studies show that treating pregnant women before they go into labor doesn't really help their babies. The bacteria comes back within a short time.

The best way to protect your baby is being tested for GBS during pregnancy and treated with antibiotics during labor.

Receiving antibiotics during labor will decrease the risk that your baby will become sick with a GBS infection.

Early in pregnancy, your urine will be tested for GBS. You are tested again between 35 and 37 weeks with a swab of your vagina and rectum.

If you are found to carry the GBS bacteria, you will be offered antibiotics through an IV (intravenous) line during labor or when your water breaks, whichever comes first.

If you had a baby in the past who became sick with GBS after birth, your health care team will assume you have GBS. You won't need to be tested during your current pregnancy and you will be offered antibiotics during labor.

What to Do After Your Baby is Born

If your baby develops a GBS infection, most symptoms occur during the first 7 days. Your health care team will watch your baby closely for signs of infection until you leave the hospital.

They will also teach you what to watch for after you take your baby home.

What to Watch for When You Take Your Baby Home

Call your baby's health care provider right away if your baby has any of these symptoms:

- a temperature of 100 F rectally or higher or if his or her temperature is lower than 97.5 F.
- is sleepier than usual or is unable to wake.
- has a poor feeding when it is time to feed
- has a change in skin color: pale, patchy or spotted skin (mottled) or jaundice (yellowing of your baby's skin, whites of the eyes and body)
- has trouble breathing.