

# Group B Strep (GBS) in Pregnancy

## What Is Group B Strep?

Group B Strep, or GBS, is one of many bacteria that live in everyone's body. Even though GBS isn't usually harmful to you, it might make your baby sick.

### About GBS

- GBS lives in the stomach, anus, and vagina. Most people don't know they have GBS in their body.
- About 1 in every 4 women has GBS at the end of their pregnancy.
- Having GBS doesn't mean you have an infection, but it might **cause** an infection.
- GBS is not a sexual infection.
- Some people have GBS all the time, and sometimes it comes and goes.

### When Does GBS Cause Infection?

- Most babies do not get sick from GBS. Sometimes newborns get a lung or blood infection from GBS during birth.
- Sometimes you can get a GBS infection in your uterus during labor.
- Sometimes you can get a urinary tract infection (UTI) from GBS.

### How Do I Know If I Have GBS?

Around 36 weeks of your pregnancy, you'll get a test to see if you have GBS in your body.

- You will use a sterile Q-tip to get a sample from the outer part of your vagina and just inside the anus.
- The sample will get tested. If the test is positive, this means you have GBS in your body. We would say you are **GBS positive**.

If your GBS test is positive, you'll probably have GBS in your vagina when you go into labor. It is important that you get treated so you don't pass GBS on to your baby.



### If You're In Labor and You're GBS Positive:

1. Call OB Triage at 272-2460 right away if you think you're in active labor or if your water bag broke or is leaking. Plan to get IV antibiotics during labor.
2. Tell the staff in OB Triage that you are GBS positive.
3. Tell the staff if you're allergic to penicillin.



## If I Am GBS Positive, How Will I Get Treated?

The best treatment for GBS is getting penicillin during labor. Penicillin is an antibiotic that will remove GBS from your vagina.

We'll try to give you at least 2 doses of penicillin before the baby is born to make sure the GBS is fully removed. This protects your newborn from getting sick.

If you don't have time to get penicillin during labor, we'll watch your baby closely for signs of an infection after birth. Most babies who get sick from GBS show signs of infection within 48 hours after birth.

## Can I Get Treated for GBS Before Labor?

If you get treated before labor, GBS can come back after you stop taking the medicine.

That's why it is best to take antibiotic medicine **during labor** to get rid of the GBS in your vagina quickly and to keep your baby from getting sick.

If GBS gave you a urinary tract infection (UTI) before labor, you'll be treated for the UTI. Then you'll get antibiotic medicine again when you're in labor.

## What Happens If My Baby Gets a GBS Infection?

A baby with a GBS infection might:

- Have trouble breathing. They might grunt or look pale.
- Be too hot or too cold
- Have trouble feeding
- Be too sleepy to breastfeed

We will treat the infection by giving your baby IV antibiotics. Your baby may have to stay longer in the hospital.

## How Dangerous Is GBS?

If you have GBS in your body at the time of birth and you get IV penicillin during labor, the risk of your baby getting sick is very rare (about 1 in 4000 babies get sick).

If a baby does get sick with GBS:

- Most babies get better when they're treated with IV antibiotics, especially if GBS is caught early and the baby is full-term (37 to 42 weeks).
- About 1 in 6 babies who get sick can have serious complications.
- Some babies who are very sick can die.

### What if I'm Allergic to Penicillin?

If you're allergic to penicillin, tell your health care provider. You can get a different antibiotic medicine during labor.

### For More Information

#### Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

[www.cdc.gov/Features/GroupBStrep/](http://www.cdc.gov/Features/GroupBStrep/)

#### March of Dimes:

[www.marchofdimes.org/complications/group-b-strep-infection.aspx](http://www.marchofdimes.org/complications/group-b-strep-infection.aspx)