

N.C. Women's Hospital

Group B Streptococcus (GBS)

The staff at N.C. Women's Hospital is committed to giving your baby the healthiest birth possible. Many women and families have heard a lot about GBS in the past few years. Here are some commonly asked questions about GBS also known as "strep B" or "Beta Strep".

What is Group B Streptococcus (GBS)?

GBS is bacteria that can be normally found in the bladder, rectum and vagina of as many as 25% or 1 in 4 women. It is not sexually transmitted and does not usually make healthy women sick, but it can cause minor bladder infections in mothers.

Why is GBS testing important?

GBS testing is important because for every 1000 mothers with GBS, one or two babies will become infected and need treatment. While women don't usually get sick from this bacteria, newborns can become very ill if they become infected.

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 we recommend:

- Treatment during labor with an antibiotic through an IV (in the vein) to reduce the chance that your baby will become infected during delivery.
- Pencillin is the best drug to use but if you are allergic to Penicillin, we would prescribe different antibiotics, depending on the seriousness of your allergy.
- You will usually not need treatment for GBS after the birth of your baby..

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 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?

Follow the directions given to you by your provider about when to come to the hospital. Discuss with your nurse and provider whether you need to be treated for GBS during labor.

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 adequate doses of antibiotics before your delivery, your baby was full term, and your bag of waters was not ruptured for too long. You may be asked to stay an extra day so that we can watch your baby 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 100.4°F or 38°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 inform him or her that you were GBS positive during your pregnancy.

Important Link:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: GBS infection in newborns

<http://www.cdc.gov/groupbstrep/about/newborns-pregnant.html>

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