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# Group B Strep & Pregnancy

About 1 in 4 pregnant women carry a type of bacteria known as Group B Streptococcus (GBS). A woman with GBS can pass it to her fetus during labor and delivery. Most newborns who get GBS from their mothers do not have health problems, but a few will get sick. For a small number of babies, the illness can be serious and even cause death.

This document explains:

- What GBS is
- How GBS may affect a newborn
- Testing and treatment

## What is GBS?

GBS is one of the many bacteria that live in the body. In women, GBS most often is found in the vagina and rectum. GBS usually does not cause symptoms in adults. GBS is not a sexually transmitted disease. If GBS is passed from a woman and her fetus, the baby may get sick. 1 or 2 babies out of 100 can be affected.

## How GBS may affect a Newborn

Early-onset disease can cause severe problems, such as:

- inflammation of the covering of the brain or spinal cord (meningitis)
- infection of the lungs (pneumonia)
- infection in the blood (sepsis)

## Testing and Treatment

Pregnant women are screened for GBS as part of routine *prenatal care*. Screening is done between 36 and 38 weeks of pregnancy.

If the results show that GBS is present, most women will receive antibiotics once labor has started. This is done to help protect the fetus from being infected. The best time for treatment is during labor. If GBS is untreated or unknown a longer hospitalization for the infant may be recommended.