

# Group B Streptococcus (GBS) In Pregnancy

## What is GBS?

- It is a bacteria that can cause infection in both the mother and the baby.

## What kinds of infection does it cause?

- In most people, there is no illness at all.
- In pregnant and postpartum women, it can cause an infection in the bladder or the uterus.
- In babies, infection is rare but can be serious.
- Eighty percent (80%) are early GBS infections (from birth to one week) and include:
  - Pneumonia (infection in the lungs).
  - Meningitis (infection around the brain and spinal cord).
  - Sepsis (infection through the whole body).
- Meningitis is the most common late GBS infection (between 1 week and 3 months of age) but unfortunately, there is no current treatment to reduce this risk.

## How is it found?

- It is found by taking a swab of the lower vagina and rectum around the 35th to 37th week of pregnancy OR
- It may be found in a urine culture test to check for infection taken at any time in your pregnancy.

## What are the chances of my baby getting an infection?

- If a mother has GBS at the time of giving birth and does not get treated, 1 in 200 babies may get sick.
- With treatment, only 1 in 4,000 babies may get sick.

## What if I have this GBS?

- If GBS is detected in your urine, it is treated whenever the bacteria is found. A follow-up urine test should be done 2-4 weeks after treatment to be sure the bacteria is gone.
- To keep the largest number of babies from getting sick, if you have tested positive for GBS you will be given intravenous antibiotics (usually penicillin).
- The antibiotics are started after the water breaks or when you are in active labour.
- It does not help to give antibiotics before labour

## Is it bad to receive the antibiotic?

- There is a 1 in 10 chance of a person getting a mild allergic reaction to penicillin. This can be a pink spotted rash that may be itchy.
- There is only a 1 in 10,000 chance of a person developing a serious, life-threatening allergic reaction. If a woman is allergic to penicillin, there are other antibiotics that can be used.
- All antibiotics can cause other, usually minor, problems such as diarrhea or vaginal yeast infections.
- After the baby is born women may have a greater chance to get an infection in their nipples (nipple candidiasis) that can impact breastfeeding.

## So, Now What?

If you are found to have GBS when tested, you should come to the hospital when:

### 1. Your water breaks (membranes rupture).

Please call the hospital birthing area at **604-244-5134** before going into the hospital. At the hospital, an intravenous will be started and you will be given your first dose of antibiotic. This will be repeated until the birth of your baby.

### 2. You are in active labour.

If this is your first baby, the contractions come every few minutes, last 40 – 60 seconds and have been getting stronger and closer together for 2 hours. If you have had a baby before, the contractions have been this strong and long for 1 hour.

**Please call the Birth Centre of Richmond Hospital  
604-244-5134  
before going to the hospital.**