

**What is Group B Strep (GBS)?**

GBS is a bacterium that can kill babies with blood infection, pneumonia, or other infections. Babies that survive GBS may have long-term problems with hearing, vision, or learning. Not all babies who get GBS will have these problems. Group B Strep should not be confused with Group A Strep (the bacterium that causes strep throat).

**What are the symptoms of GBS?**

GBS in a newborn may cause fever, difficulty feeding, irritability, or lethargy. Most pregnant women who carry GBS have no symptoms. GBS can sometimes cause bladder infections during pregnancy or infections in the womb during labor or after delivery.

**How soon do symptoms appear?**

About half of cases of newborn GBS happen in the first week of life ("early-onset disease"), and most of these cases start a few hours after birth. GBS may also develop in infants one week to several months after birth ("late-onset disease").

**How is GBS spread?**

Group B Strep is normally found in the birth canal and lower gut in some women. Women who have GBS can easily pass it from the gut to the rectum and then into the birth canal, resulting in transfer to the baby in the womb. The majority of GBS infections are passed during childbirth, when the baby comes into direct contact with the bacteria in the mother's birth canal.

**What is the treatment for this illness?**

If a pregnant woman tests positive for GBS at the time of delivery, the mother is given the antibiotics through a vein during labor and delivery.

**What can be done to help prevent the spread of GBS?**

Doctors should test all pregnant women for GBS. Women who test positive for GBS or have risk factors can be treated with an antibiotic.