

GBS:

get tested, get treated

GBS is a bacteria that can be dangerous for pregnant women and their babies.

About 1 in 4 pregnant women have GBS in their bodies, but they may not know it. That's because GBS doesn't always make the mother sick. But, if GBS is passed to her newborn during labor and delivery, the baby can become very sick. GBS can cause:

- Pneumonia
- Sepsis (blood infection)
- Meningitis (infection in the fluid around the brain)
- Premature birth
- Stillbirth

Testing for GBS

Many women have GBS because it's a normal part of the body's bacteria. You don't get GBS from another person. It may live in the body for years without any signs. That's why all pregnant women should be tested for GBS between 35 and 37 weeks of pregnancy.

If the test is positive for GBS, the mother should get antibiotics during labor and delivery. The antibiotics are given through an IV. This is a safe and effective way to prevent serious GBS infection in the baby.



Babies most at risk

Not all babies get sick from GBS. But, because GBS can be life-threatening, every mother should be tested and treated to avoid spreading this bacteria.

Some babies may be more at risk of serious health problems from GBS. This is more likely to happen if:

- The baby is born before 37 weeks of pregnancy
- The mother's water breaks 18 hours or more before the baby is born
- The mother has a fever during labor
- The mother had a urinary tract infection during pregnancy that was caused by GBS
- The mother had a previous baby with a GBS infection

GBS can make a baby sick even if none of these risk factors happen.

Signs of GBS in babies

With proper testing and treatment, GBS can be prevented. But, it's important to know the signs of GBS infection in a baby. Get treatment right away if you notice any of these signs in your baby:

- Fever
- Breathing problems
- Being very drowsy
- Coughing or congestion
- Trouble eating

These symptoms don't mean a baby has GBS. But, any unusual signs in a baby should be checked by a doctor right away.

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Group B Strep International, March of Dimes