

GROUP B STREPTOCOCCUS & PREGNANCY (GBS)

Group B *Streptococcus* (GBS) is one of many bacteria that can be present in the reproductive tract, urinary tract, or digestive system. It is estimated that up to 40% of pregnant women will have the bacteria within vagina. GBS is not the Group A *Streptococcus* that causes “strep throat.” It rarely poses any danger to the mother’s health, and typically causes no symptoms. However, during labor and delivery, the baby could be exposed to the bacteria as it passes through the birth canal.

While most babies do not have any problems, about 1 to 2 % of babies will develop an infection from the GBS. Early infections develop within the first 7 days of life – often within the first 6 hours after birth. Late infections occur after the first 7 days. Both early and late infection can be very serious. The infection can involve the baby’s blood, lungs, brain, or spinal cord. In about 5% of infected babies, the infection is so severe that it could lead to the death of the baby.

Cultures from the vagina and vaginal opening are done at about 36 weeks into the pregnancy. If the culture shows the presence of GBS, you will be treated with an antibiotic during labor. This is highly effective in preventing infection in the baby. In addition, your pediatrician will probably want to watch your baby for 24-48 hours after delivery to be sure there is no sign of early infection.