

Group B Strep Testing

What is Group B Strep?

Group B Strep (also called GBS or Beta Strep) is a type of bacteria found in the vagina in about 30% of women. It is one of the many types of bacteria found in the vagina. It is not an infection in the mother, and does not require treatment before labor.

Why do I need to be tested for Group B Strep?

A mother who has Group B Strep and is not treated with antibiotics in labor can pass Group B Strep to her newborn. Babies do not fight infections very well and Group B Strep in a newborn can have very serious effects i.e.: pneumonia, meningitis, blood poisoning (sepsis) or even fetal death.

How is the testing done?

Late in your third trimester is when the testing takes place. It involves placing a cotton swab in the vagina and then running it down the perineum to rectum. The swab will not be placed inside the rectum. The swab is then sent to the lab to see if this particular bacteria is present.

What if I test positive?

If you test positive for Group B Strep, both the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology (ACOG) and the Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommend treating the mother during labor. You can expect to receive intravenous antibiotics when you arrive at the hospital. The dose will need to be repeated every four hours until delivery occurs. Should you develop signs of an active infection, or if the baby looks ill at birth, blood tests will need to be done to determine if the baby needs antibiotics after birth.

Why not treat early in pregnancy?

Because Group B Strep does not hurt the mom or baby during pregnancy, there is no reason to treat mothers before labor. Chances are that if a woman did get treated during her pregnancy, the Group B Strep will often return by the time the baby is born.

What happen if I miss my dose or refuse treatment?

There is a 1% chance of passing the infection to the baby. Most mothers who are Group B Strep positive and do not receive their antibiotics during labor still have healthy babies. The antibiotics in labor are used to help prevent the rare cases of serious Group B Strep infection. You should discuss with your pediatrician how they handle untreated or undertreated GBS. Many times the pediatrician will draw blood on the baby and keep the baby for 48 hours of observation.

What happens if I refuse the test or my results are unknown at the time of the birth?

If your Group B Strep results are not available at the time of delivery it is recommended that you be treated as if you had tested positive for Group B Strep. If you are refusing testing and treatment of Group B Strep there is a 1% chance your baby will be exposed. The risks to the baby of untreated Group B Strep are infection, pneumonia, meningitis and death.

I, _____, have read and understand the information above. I have been offered the Group Beta Strep Screening and have:

- Chosen **NOT** to be screened and/or treated
- Chosen to be screened and treated if indicated.
- Chosen to **ONLY** be screened.

Patient Signature

Date

References:

Center for Disease Control: Prevention of Group B Streptococcal Disease; American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology;
American Academy of Pediatrics: Pediatric Vol. 99 No.3 March 1997, pp.489-496