

Group B Strep Infection in Pregnancy

What is Group B Strep?

Group B streptococcus (GBS) is a type of bacteria that is commonly found in women's vaginas. About 35% of women's will test positive for BGS. The presence of this bacteria does not cause problems or symptoms for women. Most women will have GBS present in their vagina on and off throughout their lives.

During pregnancy however, BGS is a concern as it can affect your baby. If the baby is exposed to GBS as it is born, it can cause many serious life-threatening health problems including:

- Meningitis
- Sepsis (life threatening blood infection)
- Pneumonia

For every 200 women who test positive for BGS, 1 or 2 babies will be infected.

How is it tested for?

The test is performed around week 36 of your pregnancy and is done by gently swabbing the opening of your vagina and rectum with a cotton swab. The swab is then sent out to a lab where it is cultured to see if GBS is found. A positive culture means that the mother has GBS. A negative culture does not always ensure that you will not have GBS at the time of delivery.

How is it treated?

If you test positive for GBS, it is strongly recommended that you get antibiotics during your labor to protect your baby. Treatment with antibiotics greatly reduced the risk of infection to your baby. The antibiotic given is usually a form of Penicillin (unless you are allergic) and it is given by IV. It is started at the beginning of labor or when your water breaks and continued to be given every 4 hours until you deliver you baby.

Being BGS positive does not mean that you can no longer have a water birth.