



YOUR NEWBORN AND GROUP B STREP

Group B Strep (GBS) is a common bacterium found among humans. Many people, including 10 – 35% of pregnant women, are carriers of GBS although they have no signs of infection and are perfectly healthy. However, it is a leading cause of serious infection in newborns, who are much more susceptible.

How does a baby acquire GBS infection? Most commonly, it is transmitted from the mother during labor and delivery from amniotic fluid or vaginal fluid. While as many as 35% of newborns have some exposure to GBS, only 1 – 2% of them become sick from it.

Many doctors now test pregnant women at around 35 – 37 weeks gestation to check for the presence of GBS. Mothers who test positive as GBS carriers are more likely to transmit the infection to their babies, especially in the presence of certain risk factors.

RISK FACTORS

- Pre-term labor or pre-term rupture of membranes (3 weeks or more before the due date)
- Prolonged rupture of membranes (more than 18 hours before birth)
- Fever during labor
- A previous newborn with GBS infection
- Urinary tract infection as a result of GBS

If a mother tests positive to GBS during pregnancy and/or has any of the risk factors, she may be given intravenous penicillin or other antibiotics during labor. When antibiotics are administered according to guidelines, the risk of a GBS positive mother delivering a baby with GBS disease is reduced from 1 in 200 to 1 in 4000.

Eighty percent of GBS infection in newborns occur in the first week of life, and most are apparent within a few hours of birth. Parents whose babies are at risk should be watchful for symptoms of GBS in their newborn and seek medical care without delay if these symptoms are noted.

SYMPTOMS OF GBS INFECTION IN NEWBORNS

- Respiratory distress
 - Noisy “grunting” on the out-breaths
 - Nasal flaring with each breath

- Rapid respirations over 65 per minute when the baby is at rest
- Blue or dusky color in the central part of the body
 - Blue hands and feet are normal
- Inability to maintain normal temperature
 - 97 – 99 degrees under the arm or 98 – 100 degrees rectally
- The above symptoms coupled with failure to feed

Mercy Family Birthing Center

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