



# Now that you've tested positive for Group B Strep (GBS), learn how to help protect your baby

*Testing positive for GBS means that you “carry” or are “colonized” with group B strep, a bacteria naturally found in the digestive tract and birth canal of 1 in 4 pregnant women. GBS is the most common cause of meningitis, sepsis, and pneumonia in newborns in the United States. It can infect babies before birth and up to six months of age, causing death or lifelong handicaps.*

## You can help protect your baby from GBS

### ...DURING PREGNANCY

- Ask your doctor to do a urine culture for GBS and other bacteria in at least your first and third trimesters. *GBS in your urine puts your baby at greater risk. Oral antibiotics should be prescribed.*
- See your doctor for any symptoms of vaginal infection such as vaginal itching/burning or unusual discharge.
- Avoid unnecessary, frequent, or forceful cervical exams and membrane stripping or cervical ripening gel to induce labor. *Invasive procedures can push GBS closer to your baby so that your baby can be infected by GBS even before your water breaks.*
- Tell your doctor if you are allergic to penicillin. There are other antibiotics available as an alternative to penicillin.
- Plan ahead if you have short labors or live far from the hospital. *The IV antibiotics you should receive during labor generally take 4 hours to be effective.*
- If you are having a planned C-section, ask to start IV antibiotics 4 hours before your incision. *C-sections do not prevent GBS infection.*
- Talk to your doctor about internal fetal monitors to make sure the benefits outweigh the risks. *The cut in your baby's scalp can allow GBS to enter your baby's bloodstream before you have received IV antibiotics for at least 4 hours.*

### ... WHEN YOUR WATER BREAKS OR YOU START LABOR

- Call your doctor. Report any fever. Go to the hospital right away to start IV antibiotics.
- Avoid unnecessary, frequent, or forceful cervical exams during labor until you have had IV antibiotics for at least 4 hours. *Vaginal ultrasounds may be available as an alternative.*

### ...AFTER YOUR BABY IS BORN

- If you give birth before you have received 4 hours of antibiotics, the hospital may culture and observe your baby for 48 hours. You can ask for your baby to have antibiotics while waiting for results of the culture.
- Some hospitals will give your baby a shot of penicillin within 1 hour after birth to further reduce the risk of GBS infection. Ask your doctor.
- Have everyone wash their hands thoroughly before handling your baby. *GBS infection can be caused by sources other than the mother.*
- Breastfeeding can supply your baby with important antibodies to fight infection.

### GBS SYMPTOMS BABIES MAY SHOW

Take your baby to the emergency room or call your baby's doctor **immediately** if you notice these signs:

- High-pitched cry, shrill moaning, whimpering
- Marked irritability, inconsolable crying
- Grunting as if constipated
- Projectile vomiting
- Feeds poorly or refuses to eat
- Sleeping too much, not waking for feedings
- High or low temperature; hands and feet may still feel cold even with a fever
- Blotchy, red, or tender skin
- Blue, gray, or pale skin due to lack of oxygen
- Fast, slow, or difficult breathing
- Body stiffening, uncontrollable jerking
- Listless, floppy, or not moving an arm or leg
- Tense or bulgy spot on top of head
- Blank stare

