

Group B Streptococcus (GBS) - Factsheet

What is GBS?

Group B streptococci (*Streptococcus agalactiae*) cause disease in people of all ages but are typically a major cause of perinatal infections and endometritis in pregnant and postpartum women, as well as infections in neonates and young infants. Group B strep (GBS) bacteria commonly live in people's bodies and typically are not harmful, but sometimes the bacteria invade sterile sites and cause severe infections.

What are the symptoms of GBS?

The most common GBS infections among non-pregnant adults include bloodstream infections, pneumonia, and skin and bone infections. In newborn infants, symptoms within the first 24 hours after birth (range: 0 through 6 days) include respiratory distress, apnea, shock, pneumonia, and less often, meningitis. In some infants, symptoms occur later, at 3 to 4 weeks of age (range: 7 through 89 days) and commonly manifests as bacteremia or meningitis and other infections, such as osteomyelitis.

How is GBS spread?

How people spread GBS bacteria to others is generally unknown. Pregnant women can pass the bacteria to their babies most often intrapartum transmission via ascending spread of bacteria from the vagina occurs. Although unlikely, health care professionals or visitors may aid in transmission of GBS in clinical settings.

How long are people contagious?

You can carry GBS bacteria in your body for a short time — it can come and go — or you might always have it. How the bacteria are spread to anyone other than newborns are unknown.

Who gets GBS?

Anyone can get GBS disease, but newborns or adults 65 years or older who have certain medical conditions are at increased risk for GBS disease.

What treatment is available for people with GBS?

No effective strategy has yet been identified for how to prevent late-onset disease or adult disease. Antibacterial therapy is required for invasive GBS infections and is determined by age.

Do infected people need to be kept home from school, work or daycare?

Other people who live or work with someone who has GBS bacteria, including other children, are not at an increased risk of getting sick.

How can I protect myself and my family from getting invasive GBS?

Antibiotics given to women who are at increased risk of having a baby who will develop GBS disease will protect babies from infection, if given during labor. In situations of transmission of GBS in delivery rooms and nurseries, infection prevention and control practice should be followed.