



## AWARENESS

# STREP IS SOMETHING TO 'B' CONCERNED ABOUT

Approximately one in four pregnant women carry Group B Streptococcus (GBS), which is a type of gram-positive streptococcal bacteria known to cause sepsis and meningitis in new-borns.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), GBS can also infect babies *in utero* – leading to miscarriage, stillbirth and premature delivery.

Usually passed via their mothers during labour, babies that contract GBS can get severely sick in the first few months of life and they sometimes have lasting handicaps. Even with treatment, many infants die from it. Late-onset of GBS could result from the baby coming into contact with someone else who has GBS.

**Symptoms** of early onset GBS may appear within a few hours after delivery. Listed by the

The Group Strep B International website, these typically include:

- “breathing problems”
- “heart and blood pressure instabilit
- “gastrointestinal and kidney problems.”

Common complications due to GBS include sepsis, pneumonia and meningitis. In most cases, babies are treated with intravenous antibiotics.

### Who should get tested?

The CDC states that “doctors should test pregnant woman for GBS bacteria between 36 to 37 weeks.”

If a pregnant woman tests positive, she should be given antibiotics during labour which can significantly reduce the risk transmitting the infection during childbirth.

*“A pregnant woman who tests positive for GBS bacteria and gets antibiotics during labour has only a 1 in 4,000 chance of delivering a baby who will develop GBS disease. If she does not receive antibiotics during labour, her chance of delivering a baby who will develop GBS disease is 1 in 200” – CDC.*

Other ages and groups that may be at risk include people over the age of 65. But any adult that shows symptoms should get tested.

Despite it being a considerable burden of disease globally, there is still no vaccine for preventing GBS. Testing pregnant women and giving antibiotics in labour to those at high risk are the best ways to reduce the spread of infection and help save lives.