Indiana State Department of Health
Epidemiology Resource Center

Quick Facts

About…Group B Streptococcus (GBS) Infections (invasive disease)

What is Group B Streptococcus (GBS) disease?

Group B Strep causes many types of infections. Rarely, these bacteria can enter areas of the body where bacteria are not found, such as the blood or the fluid surrounding the brain and spinal cord. When bacteria enter these areas, a life-threatening infection ("invasive disease") can develop. Approximately 400 cases of invasive GBS were reported in 2014 for the state of Indiana. However, as of December 15, 2015 GBS is no longer a reportable condition.

What are the symptoms of GBS disease?

GBS infections are a leading cause of invasive bacterial infections in the newborn. The newborn may be irritable, fussy, tired, and have difficulty feeding. Pregnancy related infections include shock, infection of the amniotic sac, and stillbirth. Among older adults, infections most often present as shock, soft tissue, bone or joint infections.

How is GBS spread?

The bacteria are commonly found in the gastrointestinal tract and are passed from person to person. Up to 30% of pregnant women carry the bacteria and can spread the bacteria to their newborn during delivery.

Who is at risk for getting GBS?

- **Newborns**: The risk is high for infants born to healthy women who carry the bacteria. The risk of infection is also slightly higher in newborns born at less than 37 weeks gestation.

- **Adults**: The risk is greatest for persons with chronic disease, such as diabetes, liver failure, or those who have experienced recent trauma.

How do I know if I have GBS disease?

If you feel that you may have an infection, it is important to seek medical attention immediately. Your health care provider may collect blood or samples from other sites of infection to see if GBS bacteria are present.

How is GBS treated?

GBS infections can be treated with antibiotics. Soft tissue or bone infections may require surgery.

How is GBS prevented?

- **Newborn prevention:** Pregnant women should be screened for GBS between 35 – 37 weeks of each pregnancy. If found to be a carrier, antibiotics can be given during delivery to reduce spread of GBS to the baby.

- **Adult prevention**: Good personal hygiene is important. Wash hands regularly, especially after coughing or sneezing, and before and after caring for a sick person.

All information presented is intended for public use. For more information, please refer to: http://www.cdc.gov/groupbstrep/index.html

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