



# 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 normally 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 in 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 is a leading cause of invasive disease in newborns. A newborn with GBS may be irritable, fussy, tired, and have difficulty feeding. Pregnancy-related infections include bloodstream infections, infection of the amniotic sac, and stillbirth. Among older adults, GBS most commonly causes bloodstream infections, pneumonia, skin or soft tissue infections, and bone or joint infections.

#### **How is GBS spread?**

The bacteria are commonly found in the gastrointestinal or genitourinary tracts and are passed from person to person. About 15% to 35% 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 of GBS disease is higher 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 other medical problems, such as diabetes, heart disease, cancer, liver or kidney disease, or obesity.

### **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 healthcare provider may collect blood or other samples 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 36 – 37 weeks of each pregnancy. If found to have the bacteria, 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, sneezing, or using the bathroom, 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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