

Group B Streptococcus (GBS)

Maternity Services



What is GBS?

Group B Streptococcus (GBS) is a common bacterium that is found in the body. It is usually harmless in healthy adults. During pregnancy, GBS can be found in the vagina or rectum in 10 - 40% of women. During the birth process, GBS can infect some babies, causing serious illness.

Facts about GBS

- Even if you have GBS, your baby will not necessarily be infected or develop serious illness.
- GBS is not a sexually transmitted disease.
- GBS is not the same as other types of streptococci bacteria, such as those that cause strep throat.
- GBS usually causes no symptoms or problems in adults.
- Pregnant women who have GBS can pass this infection to their babies if their waters break or during labour and birth.
- Treatment for GBS given to the mother during labour and birth reduces the chances of the baby becoming infected.

What can increase the risk?

Certain risk factors during pregnancy can increase your chances of passing GBS to your newborn. Here are some of the risk factors:

- A urinary tract infection with GBS.
- Breaking or leaking of the amniotic sac (the bag of fluid that holds the baby) earlier than 37 weeks.
- Labour earlier than 37 weeks.
- The amniotic sac being broken for 18 hours or more before birth with an increase in your temperature.
- High temperature during labour.
- You have had another baby who has developed GBS infection.



Treatment for GBS

If you have tested positive to GBS, and ruptured your membranes, your labour will be induced and you will be given intravenous antibiotics during labour and birth to help protect you and your baby.

Your newborn baby

The clinical signs in more than 90% of cases are apparent in the first 24 hours of life. Your baby will be closely monitored for any signs or symptoms and prompt treatment will be given if needed.

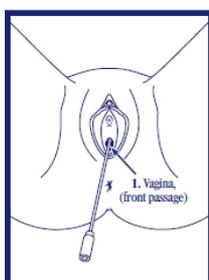
GBS testing

In accordance with current medical evidence, it is recommended that all women are tested at 35 - 37 weeks of pregnancy. You can complete the test at home. This involves a simple and painless process using a sterile cotton swab to take samples from the vagina and anus. The samples are then sent to a laboratory.

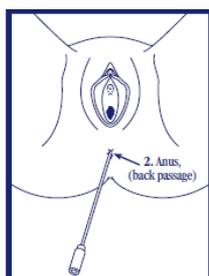
The results show whether you have GBS in your genital area. The test results, however, cannot say whether or not your baby will become infected with GBS.

How to collect the sample

- You will be given a sterile swab by your doctor or midwife.
- Please refer to the diagrams below.
- Once completed, label the swab with your full name, date of birth, and time and date of collection.
- The swab and pathology request slip will then need to be given to St John of God Pathology within 24 hours of collection.

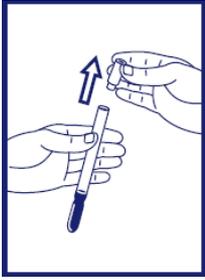


1. Wash hands thoroughly before performing this test. Remove swab from packaging. Insert swab 2 cm into vagina (front passage). Do not touch cotton end with fingers.

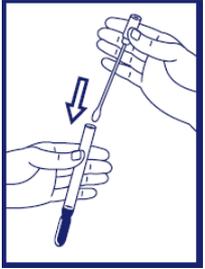


2. Insert the **same** swab 1 cm into anus (back passage).





3. Remove cap from sterile tube.



4. Place swab into the tube. Ensure cap fits firmly. Wash hands upon completion of the test.

5. Make sure swab container is fully labelled with your full name, date of birth, UR number, date and time of collection. Place swab container and request slip into transport bag and take to a St John of God Pathology collection centre within 24 hours of collection.

Recommended websites for more information

Baby Center

www.babycenter.com.au/a1647/gropu-b-streptococcus

Group B Strep Support

www.qbss.org.au

Department of Health: GBS parent information

[http://docs.health.vic.gov.au/docs/doc/51BD0F33798477D4CA257D880077C7CE/\\$FILE/Parent%20information%20Kate.pdf](http://docs.health.vic.gov.au/docs/doc/51BD0F33798477D4CA257D880077C7CE/$FILE/Parent%20information%20Kate.pdf)

This document was developed by Maternity Services, Barwon Health.

