



GBS Screening Information

Group B *Streptococcus*, or *Streptococcus agalactiae*, is a gram-positive bacterium that can cause invasive disease primarily in infants, pregnant or postpartum women and adults, with the highest incidence among young infants. Not all babies who test positive for GBS will get sick, but if they do, they will usually show signs of respiratory infection and fever. Much more rarely GBS will present as meningitis.

The CDC recommends that all women be tested for GBS in their 35th to 37th week of pregnancy. This test is a painless “swab” from the lower vagina to the outside of the rectum with a large cotton swab. It is then cultured to determine if GBS is present. If the culture comes back positive, the CDC recommends that IV antibiotics be given every 4 hours during labor to kill the GBS and reduce the risk of the baby becoming infected.

The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (RCOG) takes a different approach. Instead of using universal screening, they recommend using a risk factor assessment when dealing with GBS. There are certain risk factors that make a baby being exposed to GBS much more dangerous. These risk factors include labor that begins before 37 weeks gestation, waters ruptured for more than 18 hours before labor has begun, maternal fever greater than 102 during labor, GBS present in the urine, and a previous baby with a GBS infection. If any of these risk factors are identified, then RCOG recommends IV antibiotics during labor.

Both the USA and the UK have similar statistics when it comes to GBS. Both countries report that about 25% of pregnant women at any given time will test positive for GBS. They also have similar rates of babies contracting GBS infections: 0.2/1000 births overall, and 2.3/1000 for women who are GBS positive. In addition, the vast majority of babies who fall sick with a GBS infection fully recover. RCOG estimates that in the entire population (not just those whose mother's are GBS+), 5000 babies would have to be treated with antibiotics to prevent 1 infection, and over 80,000 babies would have to be treated to prevent 1 death.

The midwifery regulations in Colorado do not require us to obtain a GBS test. The CDC and the RCOG both recommend the risk-factor approach to determining therapy in cases where GBS status is unknown. However, most hospital protocols insist that women whose GBS status is unknown be treated as if they were GBS positive and be given antibiotics.

It is your choice as to whether you want a GBS test. If you choose to test and it is positive, there are many natural methods you can employ to try to kill off the GBS and repopulate your vagina with healthy bacteria.

References:

Prevention of Perinatal Group B Streptococcal Disease Revised Guidelines from CDC, 2010

Prevention Of Early Onset Neonatal Group B Streptococcal Disease RCOG Guideline No. 36

Informed Choice for GBS Screening:

After reading and understanding the above information, I choose, from the following options:

-I choose to decline GBS testing and instead employ the risk-factor assessment approach to monitor for the possibility of GBS infection.

Signed _____ Date _____

Midwife Signature _____ Date _____

-I choose to be tested for GBS

If I test GBS positive I choose from among these options available to me:

_____ Do nothing and carefully monitor mother and baby for signs of infection

_____ Treat with natural remedies and waive retesting

_____ Treat with natural remedies and choose to retest

_____ Transfer from midwifery care to a hospital based provider (OB) for the remainder of pregnancy, go to the hospital when labor commences to obtain IV antibiotic therapy and have a hospital birth.

_____ Transport to the hospital when labor commences, transfer from midwifery care to the on call OB to receive IV antibiotic therapy and have a hospital birth.

_____ I understand that Colorado Midwifery Regulations state I must transport to the hospital if my waters break without labor commencing within 12 hours and I am GBS+.

Signed _____ Date _____

Midwife Signature _____ Date _____