



# Neonatal Group B Streptococcus

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## What is it?

- Neonatal Group B Streptococcal disease is caused by the bacteria group B streptococcus. It can be found in healthy individuals within the intestines, reproductive tract, and urinary tract.
- It can cause serious illness in newborn infants.

## How is it spread?

- If the bacteria are present in an individual's genital tract, it can be passed to the baby just before, or during, childbirth.
- Other people who live with someone who has these bacteria, including other children, are not at risk of getting sick.
- There is no evidence that the bacteria can spread through food, water, or other things that people might have come into contact with.

## What are the symptoms?

- Symptoms can start with a fever, difficulty feeding, irritability, lethargy (limpness or hard to wake up baby), difficulty breathing, and a blueish colour to skin.
- It is important for the newborn to receive medical attention right away as symptoms can progress to sepsis, pneumonia, meningitis (inflammation in the brain), osteomyelitis (inflammation or swelling in the bone), apnea (breathing stops), or shock.

## What is the treatment?

- Antibiotics can be used to get rid of these bacteria.
- Treatment will be decided by your healthcare provider.
- Treatment needs to be started as soon as possible.

## Can it be prevented?

- Your healthcare provider can screen you during prenatal care.
- Individuals who are pregnant and who have the bacteria in their bodies can be given antibiotics to help decrease the chances of the newborn becoming infected and to decrease the severity of the disease.

For further information, please contact the Communicable Disease Control (CDC) Program at 705-474-1400 or toll free at 1-800-563-2808, ext. 5229.

## References:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2022). Group B Strep (GBS). Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/groupbstrep/index.html>

Ministry of Health. (2022). Infectious Diseases Protocol, Appendix 1: Group B Streptococcal Disease, Neonatal. Retrieved from: [https://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/oph\\_standards/docs/group\\_b\\_strep\\_chapter.pdf](https://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/oph_standards/docs/group_b_strep_chapter.pdf)

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