



IS GROUP B STREP ONLY A CONCERN AT BIRTH?

While it is thought that babies are most often infected with group B strep (GBS) as they pass through the birth canal, unfortunately, babies can also be infected by GBS before birth and up to several months of age.

DURING PREGNANCY

Studies have shown that group B strep is able to cross intact membranes reaching the baby in the womb (prenatal-onset).

- "GBS can cross intact amniotic membranes."¹
- "Universal screening and intrapartum antibiotic prophylaxis have had no measurable impact on late-onset GBS disease, prenatal-onset disease (including stillbirths and miscarriages), or GBS disease among nonpregnant adults...The burden of prenatal-onset GBS disease has not been assessed adequately, and no effective prevention tools have been identified before the intrapartum period."¹
- Seventeen studies reported GBS-related stillbirth rates varying from 0.04 to 0.9 per 1000 births, with the proportion of stillbirths associated with GBS ranging from 0 to 12.1%. Most studies reported data from before the year 2000 and from high-income countries.²

AFTER BIRTH

Once born, GBS disease can be caused by sources other than the mother (early or late-onset).

- Two distinct clinical syndromes of invasive GBS disease in the newborn exist... GBS late-onset disease presents between 7 days after birth and 2–3 months of age and is characterized by bacteremia, meningitis, or less commonly, organ or soft tissue infection. Late-onset disease is primarily acquired by horizontal transmission from the mother, but also can be acquired from hospital sources or from individuals in the community.³
- "Because of declines in early-onset GBS disease, the burden of late-onset disease is now similar to that of early-onset disease. More research on preventive measures against late-onset disease is needed."¹

REFERENCES

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3. ACOG Committee Opinion No. 797: Prevention of Group B Streptococcal Early-Onset Disease in Newborns. February 2020.