

# **Group B streptococcus (GBS) infection in newborn babies**

Group B Streptococcus (GBS) resides in a gut or genital tract and is especially dangerous in newborn babies when passed from a mother to baby during childbirth, causing serious infections like sepsis or meningitis.

Last reviewed  
18 June 2026

## **Case definitions**

Infection in newborn babies is divided into 2 types:

1. Early onset disease (EOD): Age 0-6 days of age
2. Late onset disease (LOD)

: Age 7-90 days of age

Group B Streptococcus (also called GBS or Strep B) is a bacterium carried by up to 30 per cent of people without causing harm or symptoms. In women it is found in the intestine and vagina and causes no problem in most pregnancies. In a very small number it infects the baby, usually just before or during labour, and can lead to serious illness.

## **Screening for GBS**

In Northern Ireland, as in the rest of the UK, routine testing for GBS in pregnancy is not currently recommended because there is insufficient evidence to support it. This position is kept under regular review. If you are concerned about GBS, discuss it with your doctor or midwife.

Information for the public

- [Group B Streptococcus and pregnancy](#)
- [UKHSA Group B streptococcal infections](#)
- [Group B Streptococcus and pregnancy | nidirect](#)
- [Group B Strep Support website](#)
- [nidirect - Group B Streptococcus and pregnancy](#)
- [PI GroupB streptococcus \(GBS\) infection in newborn babies.pdf](#)

Treatment

### **Treatment for GBS**

In some circumstances antibiotics can reduce the risk of a baby developing GBS. You should be offered antibiotics during labour if:

- You have previously had a baby with invasive GBS infection
- GBS has been found in your urine in your current pregnancy
- GBS has been found on swabs from your vagina which have been taken for another reason during this pregnancy
- You have a high temperature during labour
- If you have an infection of the membranes around the baby (Chorioamnionitis)
- Your obstetrician or midwife will assess whether you need to be given antibiotics during labour. If you need antibiotics, they will be given through a vein (intravenously).

Guidance for health professionals

### **Mandatory reporting**

From 1 April 2013 Health and Social Care Trusts are required to report all confirmed cases of early and late onset Group B Streptococcus (GBS) infection in babies to the Public Health Agency.

More information about the reporting requirements of clinicians for Group B Streptococcus can be found here: [CMO GBS Letter HSS\(MD\)072013](#)

To report all notifications of Group B Streptococcus, use the following form: [GBS infection in newborn babies - mandatory reporting form](#)

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