

**Further information is available from:
Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**

We act on your behalf when handling patient and family concerns, liaising with staff, managers and where appropriate, relevant organisations to negotiate immediate or prompt solutions. We can also help you to get support from other local or national agencies.

Royal Shrewsbury Hospital, Tel: 0800 783 0057 or 01743 261691

Princess Royal Hospital, Tel: 01952 282888

Other Sources of Information

NHS 111

A fast and easy way to get the right help, whatever the time. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year.

Telephone: 111 (free from a landline or mobile)

Website: www.nhs.uk

Patient UK

Provides leaflets on health and disease translated into 11 other languages as well as links to national support/self-help groups and a directory of UK health websites.

Website: www.patient.info

Self Help & Support Groups

A selection of websites providing access to good quality patient and consumer health information, covering specific age groups and conditions.

We can also help you to get support from other local /national agencies Also includes Shropshire Community Directory which contains up-to-date information on community groups, clubs, societies, organisations, support groups and self-help groups covering Shropshire and its borders.

Website: www.library.sath.nhs.uk/find/patients/

Information in Other Formats

Please contact the Infection Prevention and Control Team if you require this leaflet in a different language or large print. Contact number 01743261134.

Website: www.sath.nhs.uk

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Patient Information

Group B Streptococcus

(Group B Strep)

(To be used in conjunction with the RCOG National GBS leaflet)

This leaflet is to give you a guide of:

What Group B Streptococcus is,
Who is a risk of Group B Streptococcus,
How Group B Streptococcus is transmitted,
What the treatment for Group B Streptococcus is,
How Group B Streptococcus can be prevented in the future.

What is Group B Streptococcus (Group B Strep)?

Group B Streptococcus (Group B Strep) is a type of bacteria called streptococcal bacteria. The bacteria form part of the normal bacterial lining of the gut. Group B Strep is also commonly found in the male and female genital tract (private area) and anus (bottom). The bacteria are not normally harmful. People can carry the bacteria in their bodies but are not infected and do not become sick. This is known as being 'colonised' or being a 'carrier'.

The bacteria can cause serious diseases in pregnant women, the elderly, and adults with other illness. It can also cause life threatening illness in newborn babies.

What kind of illnesses does group B Strep cause?

In adults, Group B Strep usually causes no symptoms. However, in rare cases, it can lead to serious bloodstream infections, urinary tract infections, skin infections, and pneumonia, especially in people with weakened immune systems and other health problems.

In newborn babies, group B Strep is the most common cause of septicaemia (infection of the bloodstream) and meningitis (infection of the lining and fluid surrounding the brain) and the common cause of pneumonia.

Group B Strep disease in newborns usually occurs in the first week of life ("early onset").

Babies can also get a slightly less serious "late-onset" form of Group B Strep disease that develops a week to a few months after birth

Who is at risk of Group B Strep?

Adults with illnesses that weaken the immune systems, such as diabetes or cancer, are at risk of infection with group B Strep.

An infant born to a woman who is carrying the bacteria can also be at risk.

A pregnant woman is at high risk if she:

- Already has a baby with group B Strep infection
- Has a urinary tract infection caused by group B Strep
- Becomes colonised with group B Strep late in pregnancy
- Develops a fever during labour
- Has a rupture of membranes 18 hours or more before delivery
- Begins labour or rupture of membranes(breaking of waters) before 37 weeks ("preterm")

How do people get infected with group B Strep?

Colonisation or being a carrier of group B Strep is usually harmless. However the bacteria can only become problematic if something happens that allows it to invade the bloodstream.

In adults, weakened immunity resulting from cancer treatment or a chronic illness can prompt an infection.

More often, pregnant women who carry the bacteria can unknowingly transmit group B Strep to their newborn at birth. Newborns can acquire early-onset group B Strep disease before or during delivery.

What is the treatment for group B Strep infection?

Group B Strep infections in both new-borns and adults are usually treated with antibiotics given through a drip.

You may be nursed isolated in a side room, to prevent any spread of infection.

How can group B Strep infection be prevented?

Most cases of group B Strep infection in newborns can be prevented by giving pregnant women antibiotics during labour. **Antibiotic treatment before labour does not prevent group B Strep infection in newborns.**

Any pregnant woman who has already had a baby with group B Strep infection or who has a urinary tract infection caused by group B Strep or a previous known colonisation in any pregnancy should be given antibiotics during labour. Pregnant women who are colonised with group B Strep should be offered antibiotics at the time of labour or rupture of the membranes.

For further information on pregnancy and GBS refer to [Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologist \(RCOG\) GBS in pregnancy and the newborn](#)

Unfortunately, some babies still get group B Strep infection despite testing and preventative antibiotics. These babies will be treated with antibiotics and additional infection control precautions may need to be taken to prevent other babies from picking up the infection.