

Your important health information

Group B streptococcal (GBS) in pregnancy, birth and the postnatal period

GBS is a type of bacteria that lives on our bodies and is part of the normal bacteria that we carry around. Women who have GBS are not sick and do not need any treatment.

If GBS is present in the vagina at the time of labour, there is a chance that it will be passed to the baby. Most babies who catch GBS remain well, but some babies get very sick and need nursery admission and intravenous antibiotics in the first few days of life.

About 20% of women have GBS in their vagina around the time of giving birth. Without treatment, about one in 200 women with GBS will have a baby that develops a serious infection.

Mercy Health recommends that all pregnant women be tested for GBS as it can cause serious infection in newborn babies.

How do you test for GBS?

You will be given a swab by your doctor or midwife at an antenatal appointment. Please see overleaf for collection instructions.

What if I choose not to complete the GBS test?

You may choose not to screen for GBS during your pregnancy. However, we recommend you discuss this with your midwife or doctor.

What does this mean for my baby and me?

The risk of babies developing this infection can be reduced by:

1. Testing mothers near their expected delivery time (35-37 weeks) and
2. Checking for other risk factors at the time of labour.

If you are a carrier of GBS or have risk factors present in labour, we recommend antibiotics during labour to reduce the risk of transmitting the bacteria to the baby. Penicillin is the most effective antibiotic against GBS. If you have a penicillin allergy, there are alternative antibiotics that can be used.

The antibiotic is given during labour through an intravenous drip in your arm or hand. It provides the best protection if it is given at least four hours before the baby is born.

There is no need for treatment during the pregnancy.

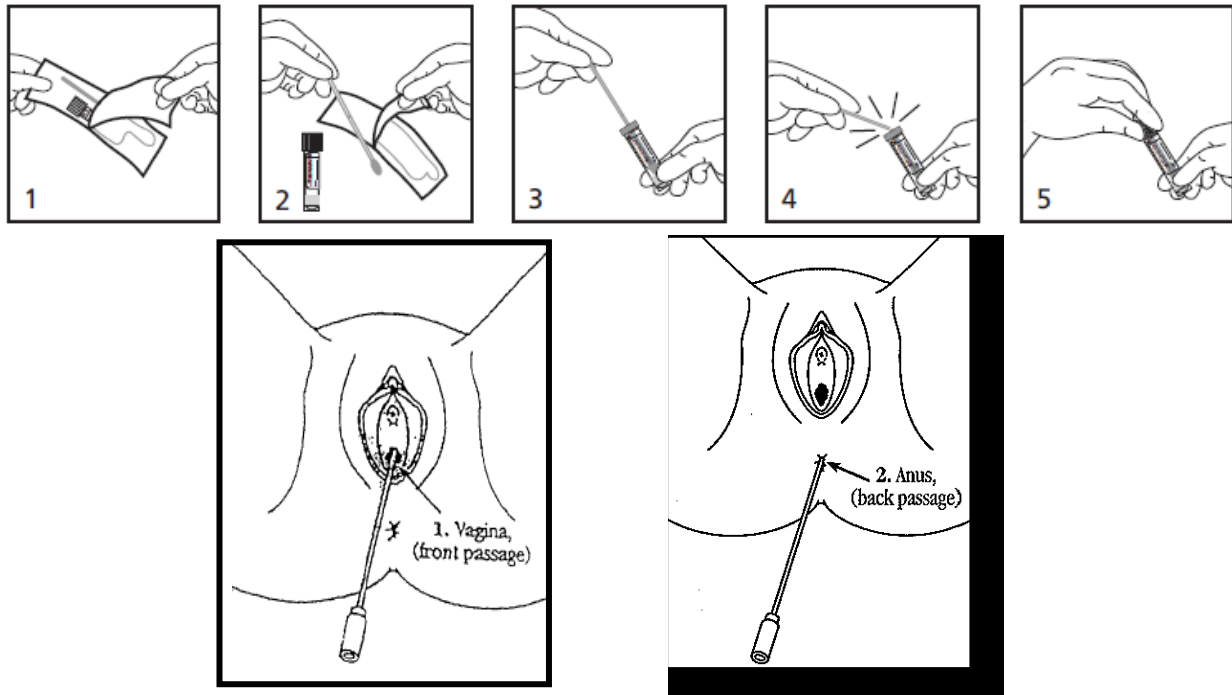
If I carry GBS, when can I go home after having my baby?

If you had at least two doses of antibiotics in labour, with the first dose given at least 4 hours before the birth, you may be able to go home from 6 hours after birth. This will be considered if both you and your baby are well and you want to go home at this time.

We will give you an information sheet about recognising serious illness in your baby and suggest regular temperature and baby checks until the midwife visits. The midwife will ask these checks continue for at least the first 48 hours.

A Mercy Health midwife will see you within 24 hours of going home.

How do I complete the GBS swab?



1. Peel open the pack and carefully remove the swab. Do not touch the cotton end with your fingers.
2. Place the swab 2-3cm into the vagina for a few seconds, and then sweep it backwards into the anus.
3. Carefully take the lid off the clear plastic container and place the swab cotton end first into the container.
4. Snap off the end of the swab (along the red line).
5. Replace the lid. Put the plastic container in the plastic bag.
6. Return the swab to the pathology collection centre:
 - please ensure your ID label is on the swab.
7. You will be notified of the result at your next visit.

Further Information

If you have any questions regarding this information, please discuss with your doctor or midwife at your next appointment.

Mercy Hospital for Women

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Werribee Mercy Hospital

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