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Group B Strep Positive Information

A routine vaginal/rectal culture has shown that you have tested positive for Group B Strep (GBS). GBS is one of the many types of bacteria that can present in the cervix and vagina of any healthy woman, pregnant or not. GBS does not pose a threat to the health of a woman, and therefore is not treated. GBS is not an STD (sexually transmitted disease). GBS becomes important during pregnancy as the baby can acquire GBS infection from the mother, after their water breaks and as the baby passes through the cervix and vagina during labor and delivery. A GBS infection in a newborn infant can be an extremely serious, even life threatening.

It has been shown that the intravenous (IV) administration of antibiotics to the mother during labor can almost always eliminate the possibility that the baby acquires GBS infection. Therefore, it is our practice to administer IV antibiotics during labor to mothers who are GBS positive. Usually the antibiotic is ampicillin unless you have a history of being allergic to ampicillin or penicillin.

It has been shown that giving the mother antibiotics during pregnancy or before labor cannot be relied upon to eliminate the GBS from the cervix and vagina. The bacteria reappear once the antibiotics have stopped. This is called a "carrier state". Therefore, we usually do not treat for positive GBS during pregnancy as this cannot be relied on to have eliminated the bacteria during labor.

Premature babies are more susceptible to GBS infections compared to full-term babies. A premature baby has less well-developed defense mechanisms against infections.

Babies of mothers who are GBS positive are double-checked by cultures and blood tests after birth.

If you are GBS positive you should call as soon as you think your water has broken. Be sure to tell the provider that you speak with that you are GBS positive.

When you are admitted to labor and delivery at the hospital, make sure you inform the nursing staff upon arrival. This information will also be available on the copy of your prenatal summary sent to the hospital, however, reminding them is helpful as well. Your cooperation will ensure that your baby will have a minimal risk of developing this serious infection.