

GROUP B STREPTOCOCCUS – PATIENT INFORMATION

Group B streptococcus (group B strep) is one of the normal bacteria found in the vagina. In fact, about 20% of women normally carry group B strep in the vagina. This usually causes no problems at all. However, about 50% of newborns will pick up the group B strep bacteria as the newborn travels through the birth canal during the birth process. These babies are said to be “colonised” with group B strep. The vast majority of these “colonised” babies have no problems at all. However, about 2% of these babies will develop a group B strep infection which can be serious and life threatening. Antibiotics given during the actual labour itself (not prior to the labour) will dramatically reduce the chance of your baby acquiring the group B strep infection. Thus, we will instruct you on how to take a lower vaginal swab. If the swab comes back from the lab showing that you carry the group B strep bacteria, then we treat you with intravenous antibiotics during the labour. This is highly protective against group B strep infection. Penicillin is the drug of first choice. However, if you are allergic to penicillin then another drug will be chosen.

DR ADAM GUBBAY (REVISED OCTOBER 2014)