

Group B Streptococcus (GBS) in Adults: Commonly Asked Questions

What is Group B Streptococcus (GBS)?

GBS is a bacteria that is found in the bowel, genital tract, urinary tract, throat, or respiratory tract of some adults. Many people carry GBS in their bodies but do not become ill.

GBS can cause mild disease in adults, such as urinary tract infections (bladder infections).

GBS can also cause serious infections in adults that include bloodstream infections, pneumonia (infection in the lung), skin and soft-tissue infections, and bone and joint infections. Rarely in adults, GBS can cause meningitis (infection of the fluid and lining surrounding the brain).

Who is at highest risk for GBS disease?

Most GBS disease occurs in adults with serious medical conditions. These conditions include persons with diabetes, liver disease, and cancer. Others at risk include people with recent trauma and those having certain types of invasive surgical procedures.

How is GBS diagnosed?

GBS is diagnosed when the bacteria are grown from cultures of the blood, cerebral spinal fluid (CSF) or other normally sterile body site. Cultures take a few days to grow.

How is GBS treated?

GBS infections are usually treated with penicillin. Sometimes other types of antibiotics are used. Soft tissue and bone infections may require surgery to treat. Treatment often depends on where the bacteria in found in the body.

Is there a vaccine for GBS in adults?

Researchers are currently working on developing a vaccine against GBS.

If you have questions about GBS, please talk with your health care provider.

