

## DHD#10 RECOGNIZES GROUP B STREP AWARENESS MONTH

### *DHD#10 Offers Information on Risks of Group B Strep*

July 11, 2022 – This July, District Health Department #10 (DHD#10) is recognizing International Group B Strep Awareness Month to raise awareness among patients, especially pregnant moms, and healthcare providers about Group B Streptococcus (GBS) and what can be done to prevent it from causing serious harm.

GBS is a type of bacteria that is naturally found in the digestive and lower reproductive tracts of both men and women. However, when found in infants or babies, GBS can cause sepsis or meningitis. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), each year nearly 20 million pregnant women carry group B strep (GBS).

“Although GBS is harmless for most pregnant women, it can be extremely serious when it passes to babies during pregnancy, childbirth or in the early weeks of life,” said DHD#10 Medical Director, Dr. Jennifer Morse.

#### There Are 3 Types Of GBS

1. **PRENATAL-ONSET GBS DISEASE** occurs before birth or before early-onset prevention strategies would be effective. Often unrecognized and includes miscarriages and stillbirths caused by GBS.
2. **EARLY-ONSET DISEASE** occurs within the first week of a newborn’s life. Pregnant women should be tested for GBS during the 35<sup>th</sup> or 37<sup>th</sup> week of each pregnancy.
3. **LATE-ONSET GBS DISEASE** occurs in babies over 1 week up to several months old. Once born, babies can become infected by sources other than the mother.

#### Did You Know?

- About 1 in 4 pregnant women "carry" or are "colonized" with group B strep (GBS). Carrying GBS does not mean that you are unclean or have poor hygiene. Anyone can carry GBS.
- According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), GBS is the leading cause of sepsis and meningitis in a newborn’s first week of life.
- Half of survivors experience neurological deficits, which is why early detection and treatment is key.

#### What Can You Do?

- **Speak with your health care provider about urine culturing tests.**
- **Know the signs of infection in unborn babies:** decreased to no fetal movement after your 20<sup>th</sup> week, frenzied fetal movement, you have any unexplained fever.
- **Know the warnings signs and symptoms of pre-term labor.** GBS can cause preterm labor as well as cause a woman's water to break too soon.
- **Avoid unnecessary invasive procedures.** Invasive procedures, such as stripping membranes, may push GBS closer to your baby where GBS is able to cross intact membranes. Vaginal or perineal ultrasounds are less invasive options.
- **See your health care provider if you have any “vaginitis” symptoms:** external vaginal burning, external vaginal irritation, unusual discharge. These symptoms may be mistaken for a yeast infection (also known as vaginal thrush) and treated incorrectly.



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[www.dhd10.org](http://www.dhd10.org)



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To learn more about group B strep, the signs and symptoms of GBS, and how to protect your baby, visit [www.groupbstrepinternational.org](http://www.groupbstrepinternational.org).

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