

**NHS Forth Valley**  
**Women and Children Services**

# **Group B Streptococcal Infection**

**Patient Information Leaflet**

A decorative graphic at the bottom of the page consisting of two overlapping, stylized blue waves. The waves are light blue and have a soft, rounded appearance, creating a sense of movement and flow.

## What is Group B Streptococcus?

Group B streptococcus (GBS) is a common type of bacteria which is the most frequent cause of serious infection in newborn babies. Around 1 in 1000 babies in the UK develop a GBS infection i.e. about 700 babies a year.

One in every four or five pregnant women carries GBS in the bowel or vagina without it causing any problems or symptoms (this is called being a carrier). Babies are usually exposed to GBS shortly before or during birth. We do not know why some babies develop infection and others do not. However, we do know most GBS infections in newborn babies can be prevented by giving mothers intravenous antibiotics (into a vein) when labour starts or when the waters break.

## Who is at Risk?

Some pregnant women are more at risk than others of having a baby who develops GBS infection. A pregnant woman is at high risk if she:

- Has waters broken for more than 24 hours
- Starts labour or waters break prematurely (before 36 weeks)
- Has a raised temperature in labour of more than 38°C
- Has a GBS urine infection in the present pregnancy
- Has already had a baby with GBS infection
- Has had a vaginal swab positive for GBS in this pregnancy.

## Can it be Prevented?

If you are at risk you will be offered antibiotics when you go into labour. You will not be given antibiotics during pregnancy unless you have a urine infection due to GBS. This is because treating carriers antenatally has been shown not to prevent GBS infections in babies.

## What is the Treatment?

### Intravenous Antibiotic Treatment

- Will be started when labour becomes established and given every 4 hours till your baby is born. If you are allergic to penicillin we will give you an alternative every 8 hours.
- If you develop a temperature during your labour you will be given antibiotics every 8 hours.

## What About my Baby?

Ideally you should have antibiotics 4 hours or more before the baby is born. After birth your baby will be checked every 4 hours the first day and a paediatrician can come to see your baby if necessary.

Occasionally labour progresses very quickly and there is not enough time for the antibiotics. If you have not had antibiotics at least 4 hours before the baby is born swabs will be taken from your baby's ear and groin at birth. The baby will be checked every 4 hours as above and a paediatrician will be asked to come and examine your baby within the first 4 hours. There is a paediatrician available at any time if there are any concerns.

## What Can I Do?

If you know that you are in one of the risk groups you should remind the midwife about this when you go into labour or if your waters break.

*If you need more information please ask your midwife.*

## Patient Appointments/Cancellations

If you have an enquiry about an appointment or would like to cancel it, please call 01324 566249 or email: [FV-UHB.RTT@nhs.net](mailto:FV-UHB.RTT@nhs.net)

### If you can't go let us know!

Every month around 2,000 people across Forth Valley fail to turn up for hospital appointments. This costs the NHS millions of pounds each year and increases waiting times. So if you are unable to attend or no longer require your hospital appointment please let us know so we can offer it to someone else.

**We are happy to consider requests for this publication in other languages or formats such as large print. Please call 01324 590886 (24hrs), fax 01324 590867 or email [disability.department@nhs.net](mailto:disability.department@nhs.net)**

**For all the latest health news visit [www.nhsforthvalley.com](http://www.nhsforthvalley.com)  
follow us on [twitter](https://twitter.com/NHSForthValley) @NHSForthValley  
or like us on [facebook](https://www.facebook.com/nhsforthvalley) at [www.facebook.com/nhsforthvalley](http://www.facebook.com/nhsforthvalley)**

### SMOKING IS NOT PERMITTED ON NHS FORTH VALLEY PREMISES

This includes corridors, doorways, car parks and any of our grounds. If you do smoke on NHS premises you may be liable to prosecution and a fine.



**INVESTORS  
IN PEOPLE** | Silver

NHS Forth Valley  
Administration Offices  
Westburn Avenue, Falkirk FK1 5SU  
[www.nhsforthvalley.com](http://www.nhsforthvalley.com)

Re-order Ref: PIL/1031/WCCS

Review Date: 2020

