

# GROUP B STREPTOCOCCAL (GBS) INFECTION OF THE NEWBORN

## Case definition

### CONFIRMED CASE

Clinical illness in an infant less than 1 month of age with laboratory confirmation of infection:

- isolation of group B *Streptococcus* [*Streptococcus agalactiae*] from a normally sterile site [such as blood or cerebrospinal fluid]

**OR**

- demonstration of group B Streptococcus DNA in a normally sterile site

### PROBABLE CASE

Clinical illness in an infant less than 1 month of age with laboratory confirmation of infection:

- detection of group B Streptococcus antigen in a normally sterile site

## Causative agent

*Streptococcus agalactiae*.

## Source

Humans

## Incubation

- Early onset disease: Usually occurs within the first 24 hours of life [range 0-6 days].
- Late onset disease: occurs at 3 to 4 weeks of age [range 7 days to 3 months].

## Transmission

Transmission from mother to infant occurs shortly before or during delivery. After delivery, person-to-person transmission can occur.

## Communicability

Unknown

## Symptoms

Invasive disease in infants is divided into two categories:

- Early onset disease (1-7 days), characterized by sepsis, respiratory distress, apnea, shock, pneumonia, and meningitis
- Late onset disease (7 days to 1 month) characterized by bacteremia, meningitis and other focal infections

Group B streptococci also cause chorioamnionitis and post-partum endometritis and systemic infections in non-pregnant adults.

## Diagnostic testing

Exudate from infected area for culture

## Treatment

Ampicillin plus an aminoglycoside is the initial treatment of choice for a newborn. For treatment of meningitis, consult appropriate specialist.

## PUBLIC HEALTH MANAGEMENT & RESPONSE

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No public health follow-up required. This is a notifiable disease.

Any pregnant woman who has previously had a baby with GBS disease should discuss this with her physician.

Refer to current Reproductive Care Guidelines for management of group B streptococcus in pregnant women and newborns.

## Surveillance forms

[novascotia.ca/dhw/populationhealth/surveillanceguidelines/NS\\_Notifiable\\_Disease\\_Surveillance\\_Case\\_Report\\_Form.pdf](https://novascotia.ca/dhw/populationhealth/surveillanceguidelines/NS_Notifiable_Disease_Surveillance_Case_Report_Form.pdf)

[novascotia.ca/dhw/populationhealth/surveillanceguidelines/Other\\_Disease\\_Case\\_Report\\_Form.pdf](https://novascotia.ca/dhw/populationhealth/surveillanceguidelines/Other_Disease_Case_Report_Form.pdf)

### REFERENCES

[cdha.nshealth.ca/pathology-laboratory-medicine](https://cdha.nshealth.ca/pathology-laboratory-medicine)  
*Provincial Microbiology Users Manual*