Getting group B strep can be a life-threatening situation, especially for newborns. Learn more about the illness during its awareness month this July.

Group B strep can lead to:
- Bloodstream infections
- Bone infections
- Meningitis
- Pneumonia
- Sepsis

Group B strep has no vaccine, but there are ways to decrease the chance your newborn gets the disease.

Pregnant women should be tested for group B strep once they’re 36 to 37 weeks pregnant. Waiting this long is due to the fact that bacteria in the body comes and goes naturally.

During labor, a mother who tests positive for group B strep can take antibiotics. Providing the antibiotics during labor, not before labor, helps the antibiotics be as effective as possible, since bacteria regrows quickly.

Even if you test positive for group B strep, as long as you receive antibiotics during labor, your newborn will have a greatly reduced chance of getting the disease.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that if a pregnant mother tests positive for group B strep and takes antibiotics during labor, the newborn will have a 1-in-4,000 chance of developing the disease.

If a woman tests positive but doesn’t take antibiotics during labor, the newborn has a 1-in-200 chance of developing the disease.

Discuss your concerns around diseases that can affect your newborn with your doctor. Find an available provider at weillcornell.org/doctors