



When exposed to infections

Being infected with an illness in pregnancy is something that can happen. If that occurs, here's what to do

Chicken pox

If you have had chicken pox before or have been vaccinated, you are probably immune to further infection. However, you should still avoid contact with people who are infected. If you are not immune or unsure of your status and have been exposed to the illness, you should

consult your doctor as soon as possible. Your doctor will perform a blood test to check if you already have immunity. If you are immune, there is nothing to worry about. If you are not, your doctor will discuss the option of giving you antibodies to prevent you from being infected. This is because unlike in young children, chicken

pox in pregnancy can be serious. If you have chicken pox and you experience breathing difficulties, headache, or do not feel well, go directly to the A&E for assessment.

If you come down with chicken pox within a week of giving birth, your newborn may be infected. This infection is potentially life-threatening because of his immature immune system.

Group B Streptococcus (GBS)

This bacteria is found in up to 30 per cent of women (usually in the vagina or intestine) but it does not cause any harm or symptoms. In a small percentage of women, the baby can get infected by GBS as he passes through the vagina during delivery. This infection is potentially serious. The baby is more likely to be infected if you have premature labour, your water bag has leaked, you have a fever, and if you are a GBS carrier. Women with GBS urinary tract infection during pregnancy or a previous baby infected with GBS will need antibiotics at delivery. Speak to your doctor about the risks and benefits of GBS screening which is an optional test performed at 35-37 weeks of pregnancy.

Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease (HFMD)

This infectious disease occurs mainly in children under five years of age. It is spread through direct contact with saliva, nasal discharge, faeces or fluid from the blisters of an infected person, or touching objects contaminated by these secretions.

There is no clear evidence that being infected with HFMD during pregnancy will cause adverse outcomes such as miscarriage, stillbirth or congenital defects. But if you get infected close to your delivery date, then you risk passing it to your newborn. This can be potentially severe in the first two weeks of his life.

If you develop any type of rash when you are pregnant, consult your doctor.

Reduce your risk of getting HFMD by practising good hygiene. Wash your hands often and thoroughly.

Influenza (flu) infection

The common cold is commonly mistaken for an influenza infection with symptoms of runny nose, congestion and sore throat. Colds usually develop slowly, whereas the flu tends to come on suddenly with more severe symptoms for example, high fever, severe cough, headache and fatigue. Flu can also result in life threatening complications like pneumonia.

It is spread through respiratory droplets propelled by coughing and sneezing or through contact with contaminated surfaces.

If you suspect you have an influenza infection, stay at home and avoid contact with other people. You should also avoid strenuous physical activity. If you are worried about your illness, please see your doctor.

Annual influenza vaccination is recommended to protect against influenza for women in the second and third trimester of pregnancy. Consult your doctor for more information on the influenza vaccination.

