Hibiclens Wash for Group B Strep

Please become familiar with information presented in Prenatal Testing: Group B Strep handout before reading this handout.

4% Chlorhexadine gluconate (brand name Hibiclens) is a widely available topical disinfectant that kills bacteria on contact. It binds easily to the skin and mucous membranes. In the vagina, the anti-GBS effects of chlorhexadine last from 3-6 hours. Chlorhexadine has been shown to be safe, is easy to administer, and only costs a few cents per use.

However, although chlorhexadine reduces the risk of a newborn being colonized with GBS, it has not been shown to decrease the risk of actual GBS infections in newborns. There is a difference between being colonized and being infected. Colonized babies almost always stay healthy, while infected babies are very sick, and it is thought that an actual early GBS infection occurs when the fetus swallows infected amniotic fluid into the lungs. In a Cochrane review (Stade et al. 2004), researchers combined results from 5 randomized, controlled trials that compared vaginal chlorhexadine to a placebo on outcomes of 2,190 infants born to women who were GBS positive. There was a wide range in the quality of the studies, with only one study being very high quality. Even though women who used vaginal chlorhexadine reduced their infant’s risk of being colonized with GBS by 28%, there was no difference in rates of early GBS infection between women who used the chlorhexadine and those who did not. There were no cases of infant deaths from GBS in either group. The only adverse effects that were reported were stinging and irritation. The researchers called for a large clinical trial to test chlorhexadine for the prevention of early GBS.

If you choose to use Hibiclens wash during your labor:

Begin using vaginal wash when labor starts or when your water breaks, whichever happens first, and repeated every six hours until you give birth.

Method:

- 1 Tbsp Hibiclens (4% chlorhexidine solution) in a peri (squeeze) bottle with 1 cup water
- Squirt into vagina and onto labia and perineum as a rinse (this is NOT a douche)
- Repeat every six hours

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