

Understanding Chorioamnionitis

Chorioamnionitis (chorio) is a bacterial infection of the mother's placenta and the amniotic fluid that surrounds the baby. It is diagnosed before or shortly after delivery.

The bacteria that cause chorio are normally found in the mother's vagina. Chorio happens when the bacteria move into the uterus and cause an infection.

Chorio is more likely to happen to you if:

- Your amniotic sac (bag of water) breaks long before delivery
- You have a long labor
- You have a positive Group B Streptococcus (group B strep, GBS) screening
- You have preterm labor

Symptoms of chorio

Chorio is different for each person. But, it often includes these symptoms during labor or shortly after delivery:

- Fever
- Tender uterus
- Abnormal cervical drainage or discharge
- Foul-smelling amniotic fluid
- Fast heart rate in your baby

Your treatment for chorio

Your treatment will depend on your symptoms, allergies and medical history.

Your clinician may prescribe these medications:

- Antibiotics to treat the chorio infection
- Acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or other medication to reduce a fever

These can help prevent complications for you and your baby.

What to expect for your baby if you have chorio

At Prentice Women's Hospital, we may evaluate your baby in the Chorio Nursery, which is located on the 12th floor. Specially trained nurses and Ann and Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago pediatricians will care for your baby there.

First hour of life

If your baby looks well at birth, they will stay with you for 1 hour after delivery. We encourage you to hold (skin to skin) and breastfeed your baby during this time.

After 1 hour of life

After 1 hour, a nurse will move your baby to the Chorio Nursery. Your postpartum room will be on the same floor.

First 24 to 48 hours of life

If your baby looks well, the healthcare team will continue to monitor and assess your baby until discharge. If your baby is not showing symptoms of a possible infection, they will join you in your postpartum room.

Sometimes it is safest to monitor babies in the Chorio Nursery. Parents are welcome to be with their baby in the Chorio Nursery. We encouraged you to breastfeed and join in your baby's care. Your bedside nurse will support you. They will help you decide the best time and place for a positive breastfeeding experience, if you choose.

Possible complications of chorio for my baby

If chorio is not treated, it may cause an infection in your baby's blood, lungs or other organs. However, most babies born to patients with chorio do not develop an infection.

The healthcare team will closely monitor all babies born to patients with chorio. In some cases, a baby may need blood tests or antibiotics. If your baby gets symptoms of an infection or if the blood culture grows bacteria, the care team will transfer them to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) on the 10th floor of Prentice Women's Hospital. Symptoms may include trouble breathing, low oxygen levels or a low temperature.

Common questions

You are your baby's best advocate. We encourage you to ask questions. Some common questions include:

- Will my baby have an infection?
- What symptoms could my baby show?
- Does my baby need antibiotics?
- Can my baby stay in my room with me?

If you have any questions, please ask your healthcare provider.