

# Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19): Pregnancy and Childbirth

If you're pregnant or just had a baby, you likely have many questions about how COVID-19 could affect you and your child. Researchers are still learning more about how the virus affects pregnant women and their babies. Below is information to help you work with your healthcare team.

## What are my risks of COVID-19 while pregnant?

Researchers don't know if pregnant women are more likely to get COVID-19. But pregnancy can cause changes to your immune system that can cause any viral illness to be more severe. You should take extra care to not get sick during this time. This includes:

- Wearing a face mask in public
- Washing your hands often
- Using hand sanitizer when soap and water aren't available
- Staying at least 6 feet away from anyone not part of your household
- Staying away from anyone who is sick
- Cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces every day
- Not traveling if it's not urgent

## What are the risks to my baby?

Researchers don't exactly know yet what the risks are with COVID-19 for babies. These are some things they do know:

- High fever from any cause in the first trimester of pregnancy can raise the risk for some kinds of birth defects. Tell your healthcare provider if you have a fever. He or she will help you work to keep your fever down.
- There are only a few cases of babies found infected with COVID-19 within a few days of birth. But experts don't know if the babies picked up the virus while in the mother's womb, during childbirth, or just after.
- Preterm birth and low birth weight has happened in cases of other types of coronavirus, such as MERS, and SARS from 2003. But experts don't yet know if these are a risk with COVID-19.
- Miscarriage and stillbirth have also happened with MERS and earlier SARS. But experts don't yet know if these are a risk with COVID-19.

## Is it safe to keep my healthcare appointments?

Your healthcare team may change some of your appointments to a phone call or video chat. If you need a blood test, ultrasound, or other test in person, you may need to come without your partner. Wear a mask, use hand sanitizer, and follow all instructions from the healthcare staff at the visit to protect yourself from the virus. If you have any symptoms of COVID-19, call your healthcare office before you go to your appointment. They will give you instructions to follow.

## **What if someone in my home is sick with COVID-19 symptoms?**

If your partner or another household member has COVID-19 symptoms, he or she should self-isolate. This means staying in one part of the household away from others. He or she should not share food, towels, sheets, or other personal items. Clean common-use surfaces often, such as doorknobs and counter tops. If your partner is sick and it's near your due date, ask your healthcare provider how best to manage when you go into labor. You may be given specific instructions.

## **Is it safe to give birth at a hospital or birth center?**

Medical facilities are taking a lot of safety steps to protect people from COVID-19. Talk with your healthcare provider about the hospital or birth center you are planning to use. Ask where and how pregnant women and their partners and babies are protected. Keep in mind that your birth plan may need to change.

If you have COVID-19 and are in labor, call your healthcare provider and delivery unit before you arrive. Your hospital or birthing center will take steps to protect people around you from infection. You will need to wear a medical mask. You may be in a special room that helps prevent infections from spreading. Your baby may need to be in a separate room after birth. Ask the hospital what to expect if you are pregnant and have COVID-19.

Before and after birth, you will likely be asked to limit the number of visitors at the hospital. This is important to reduce risk of infection to everyone in the hospital. Follow all healthcare staff instructions, including their instructions on how to prepare your home for when you and baby go home.

## **Is it safe to give birth at home?**

The risks of home birth vary with each woman and each pregnancy. Talk with your healthcare team about the benefits and risks for your pregnancy. Home birth at this time may mean that emergency care could be delayed. If you were planning birth in a hospital or birth center, your healthcare provider may advise that this is still the safest plan.

## **Is it safe to hold my baby or breastfeed?**

The virus hasn't been found in the breastmilk of women with COVID-19. But the virus can spread through coughing, sneezing, and talking. If you have or may have COVID-19, wear a mask while holding your baby or breastfeeding. Wash your hands often when caring for your baby. Your provider may advise you to pump breastmilk to be given to your child by your partner. Wash your hands before and after using the breast pump supplies. If you have COVID and want to breastfeed your baby, talk with your healthcare provider about the best ways to protect your baby.

## **How can I care for my baby (after discharge) if I am positive for COVID-19?**

You will need to self-isolate to limit contact with your baby. You will need to wear a mask and wear clean clothes when holding or feeding your baby. You can pump breastmilk and store it to maintain your milk

supply until you are no longer infectious, in 7 to 10 days. Or you can pump and have your partner use this milk to feed the baby.

### **Is it safe to have visitors see the baby, or help with baby care?**

To be safe, it's best to limit visitors, especially people who have recently traveled. People who travel are at higher risk of carrying the virus. Only the closest, well family members should be in direct contact with the baby. Visitors should wear masks and keep at least 6 feet from you and the baby. It's also best to limit contact with people who are at higher risk for problems from COVID-19. This includes older adults and people with certain health conditions.

If a visitor is to hold the baby, they should wash their hands first. Wrap the baby in a blanket and then remove the blanket afterward. The visitor should then wash their hands. Visitors should not kiss or touch the baby's face. This does not apply to the closest family members unless they are sick.

Close family members should limit their contact with others and wash their hands before touching the baby.

### **When to call your healthcare provider**

If you're pregnant and have COVID-19 symptoms, call your healthcare provider right away. He or she will ask you questions about your health. You may be advised to stay home and treat your symptoms. Or you may be advised to get medical care.

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