

WHAT IS COVID-19?

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person. Patients with COVID-19 have experienced mild to severe respiratory illness, including fever, cough and shortness of breath. The virus that causes COVID-19 is a novel (new) coronavirus. It is not the same as other types of coronaviruses that commonly circulate among people and cause mild illness, like the common cold.

HOW DOES COVID-19 SPREAD?

The virus that causes COVID-19 is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person, between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet) through respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes. It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

WHAT IS THE RISK TO PREGNANT WOMEN OF GETTING COVID-19?

We do not currently know if pregnant women have a greater chance of getting sick from COVID-19 than the general public nor whether they are more likely to have serious illness as a result. Pregnant women experience changes in their bodies that may increase their risk of some infections. With viruses from the same family as COVID-19, and other viral respiratory infections, such as influenza, women have had a higher risk of developing a severe illness. It is always important for pregnant women to protect themselves from illnesses.

DOES COVID-19 POSE A HIGHER RISK FOR PREGNANT AND POSTPARTUM WOMEN?

- **Too early to tell.** At this time, the CDC has no supporting data that pregnant or postpartum women have a higher chance of contracting the COVID-19 virus or becoming more ill should they contract it.
- **Body changes.** Pregnant and postpartum women experience changes in their body that may put them at a higher risk for contracting viruses such as influenza and other respiratory infections, including COVID-19. As with any other pregnancy, care should be taken to protect themselves from illness.
- **Health of the baby.** During pregnancy, the health conditions of the mother and baby are important. At this time, the CDC has no data supporting harm to an unborn child if the mother would contract COVID-19. No infants born to mothers with COVID-19 have tested positive for the virus.
- **Share your concerns with your OBGYN.** Pregnant or postpartum women with questions about COVID-19 or who are experiencing anxiety during this time should relay their concerns to their OBGYN or healthcare provider.

CAN COVID-19 CAUSE PROBLEMS FOR A PREGNANCY?

We do not know at this time if COVID-19 would cause problems during pregnancy or affect the health of the baby after birth. If you are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, call your OBGYN to assess these symptoms and advise if any additional precautions for pregnancy are needed.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR PREGNANT AND POSTPARTUM WOMEN

Utilize [CDC Guidelines](#) for protecting pregnant and postpartum women from COVID-19.

Prehospital considerations. Symptomatic OB patients should contact the healthcare facility prior to arrival so that the facility can make appropriate infection control preparations. If arriving by EMS, EMS staff should be encouraged to screen for COVID-19 symptoms and notify the hospital as soon as possible if any suspicious patient may be symptomatic.

- **Manage visitor access during hospitalization.** Limiting visitors to only the essential support person for labor (example: partner, doula, provider, etc.), and ensure screening of support individuals for symptoms.
- **Discuss separation options.** For mothers with confirmed COVID-19, infants should be isolated, and separation should be considered by facilities according to the Infection Prevention and Control Guidance for PUIs, with consideration and communication of family's desires related to the separation of parent and child.
- **Mother/Baby contact.** If no other healthy adult is present in the room to care for the newborn, a mother who has confirmed COVID-19 or is a PUI should put on a facemask and practice hand hygiene before each feeding or other close contact with her newborn. The facemask should remain in place during contact with the newborn.
- **Hospital discharge.** Discharge for postpartum women should follow recommendations described in the [Interim Considerations for Disposition of Hospitalized Patients with COVID-19](#). Considerations and resources for feeding support, newborn follow-up, perinatal mood evaluations, and family planning services should all be addressed upon discharge for all patients, especially positive Covid-19 cases, prior to leaving the facility.
- **Persons with confirmed COVID-19** infection should remain separate (home isolation precautions) from other family members and friends or neighbors, including the infant, except for breastfeeding. Ideally, there is another uninfected adult to care for the infant's needs, including feeding the infant expressed breastmilk if the mother is expressing milk and working to maintain her supply of milk.

BREASTFEEDING AND BREAST MILK

Mothers who intend to breastfeed or continue breastfeeding should be encouraged to express their breast milk to establish and maintain milk supply, especially if separation is necessary. If possible, a dedicated breast pump should be provided. If expressing breast milk with a manual or electric breast pump, the mother should wash her hands before touching any pump or bottle parts and follow [recommendations](#) for proper pump cleaning after each use. If possible, consider having someone who is not sick feed the expressed breast milk to the infant.

Breast milk provides protection against many illnesses and is the best source of nutrition for most infants. There are rare exceptions when breastfeeding or feeding expressed breast milk is not recommended. In limited studies on women with COVID-19 and another coronavirus infection, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV), the virus has not been detected in breast milk; however we do not know whether mothers with COVID-19 can transmit the virus via breast milk.

HOW CAN PREGNANT WOMEN PROTECT THEMSELVES FROM GETTING COVID-19?

Pregnant women should do the same things as the general public to avoid infection. You can help stop the spread of COVID-19 by taking these actions:

- Cover your cough (using your elbow is a good technique)
- Avoid people who are sick
- Clean your hands often using soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer

You can find additional information on preventing COVID-19 disease at CDC's ([Prevention for 2019 Novel Coronavirus](#)).

CAN COVID-19 BE PASSED FROM A PREGNANT WOMAN TO THE FETUS OR NEWBORN?

We still do not know if a pregnant woman with COVID-19 can pass the virus that causes COVID-19 to her fetus or baby during pregnancy or delivery. No infants born to mothers with COVID-19 have tested positive for the COVID-19 virus. In these cases, which are a small number, the virus was not found in samples of amniotic fluid or breastmilk.

IF A PREGNANT WOMAN HAS COVID-19 DURING PREGNANCY, WILL IT HURT THE BABY?

We do not know at this time what if any risk is posed to infants of a pregnant woman who has COVID-19. There have been a small number of reported problems with pregnancy or delivery (e.g. preterm birth) in babies born to mothers who tested positive for COVID-19 during their pregnancy. However, it is not clear that these outcomes were related to maternal infection.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I'M EXPERIENCING SYMPTOMS?

If you are experiencing symptoms of acute respiratory illness, follow the recommended CDC guidelines:

- **Stay at home** until you are free of fever (100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or greater using an oral thermometer), signs of fever and other symptoms for at least 72 hours, without the use of fever or other symptom-reducing medicines.
- **Avoid close contact with people who are sick.**
- **Practice respiratory etiquette** (e.g., covering coughs and sneezes with a tissue or sleeve).
- **Practice frequent, proper handwashing** with soap and warm water or with hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- **Perform routine environmental cleaning.** Routinely clean and disinfect all frequently touched surfaces (e.g., doorknobs, countertops) with usual cleaning and disinfection products. Follow all instructions on the product label.
- **Contact your OB/GYN** by phone just to make them aware of your symptoms or contact telehealth.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

General questions from the public or healthcare provider inquiries about COVID-19 may be directed to the ISDH COVID-19 call center toll-free at 877-826-0011 (available 8 a.m. to midnight).

Additional information and resources for COVID-19 are available at the links below.

- CDC COVID-19 webpage: <http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus>
- ISDH COVID-19 webpage: <https://coronavirus.in.gov/>
- National Perinatal Association: <http://www.nationalperinatal.org/COVID-19>
- American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology: <https://www.acog.org/Clinical-Guidance-and-Publications/Practice-Advisories/Practice-Advisory-Novel-Coronavirus2019>
- American Academy of Pediatrics: <https://www.aappublications.org/news/2020/03/12/coronavirus031220>