

COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus) Pregnancy, Breastfeeding and COVID

Keeping safe while pregnant or breastfeeding

April 8, 2020

What you should do:

Are pregnant women at higher risk of COVID-19?

Research is currently underway to understand the impacts of COVID-19 infection on pregnant women. There is very little data available but so far, there is no evidence that pregnant women are at higher risk of severe illness than the general population.

We do know that pregnant women can be more easily impacted by some respiratory infections, so it is important to take extra precautions. If you experience fever, cough or difficulty breathing, contact your health provider.

How can pregnant women protect themselves?

Pregnant women should take the same precautions to avoid COVID-19 infection as the general population. This includes:

- Washing your hands frequently
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- Covering your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze, Dispose of the used tissue immediately
- Keeping physical space between yourselves and others of 6 feet
- Call your health care provider if you have a fever, cough or difficulty breathing

In addition, pregnant women and postpartum women including those affected by COVID-19 should attend their routine care appointments as directed by their health care provider.

Can COVID-19 be passed from a woman to her unborn or newborn baby?

We still do not know if a pregnant woman with COVID-19 can pass the virus to her fetus or baby during pregnancy or delivery. To date, the virus has not been found in samples of amniotic fluid or breastmilk.

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What do I do if I am pregnant and have been diagnosed with COVID-19?

Mothers diagnosed with COVID-19 during pregnancy should be monitored by their health care provider. They may be well enough to remain home in self-isolation or they may be admitted to hospital depending on the severity of their illness. Each family and home situation will be unique and should be discussed with your health care provider.

What care should be available during pregnancy and childbirth if I have COVID-19?

All pregnant women, including those with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 infections, have the right to high quality care before, during and after childbirth. This includes prenatal, newborn, and postnatal care.

Can women with COVID-19 breastfeed?

Yes. The Public Health Agency of Canada, the World Health Organization and the Canadian Pediatric Society state women with COVID-19 can breastfeed. Mothers who are unwell may choose to pump.

You should follow [Health Canada's COVID-19 hygiene, mask and cleaning recommendations](#), including:

- Wash your hands before and after touching the baby or before pumping.
- Cover your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze. Then dispose of the used tissue immediately because these droplets spread virus. By following good hygiene, you protect the people around you, including your baby.
- Wear a mask if available. [Homemade masks](#) can be used. Wash your hands immediately before and immediately after taking off your mask. Be careful not to touch your face or mask while using it. Cloth masks should be washed after every use. Cloth masks can be washed with other items using a hot cycle.
- Routinely clean and disinfect surfaces you have touched; if pumping, clean and sanitize all equipment.

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Can I touch and hold my newborn baby if I have COVID-19?

Yes. Close contact and early, exclusive breastfeeding helps a baby to thrive. You should be supported to:

- Breastfeed safely, with **good hygiene**
- Hold your newborn skin-to-skin, and
- Share a room with your baby

You should wash your hands before and after touching your baby and keep all surfaces clean.

I have COVID-19 and am too unwell to breastfeed my baby directly. What can I do?

If you are too unwell to breastfeed your baby due to COVID-19 or other complications, you should be supported to safely provide your baby with breastmilk in a way that is possible, available and acceptable to you. This could include expressing milk when you feel unwell and breastfeeding when you are feeling better.

Sources:

- World Health Organization
- SOGC
- Government of Canada
- Canadian Paediatric Society

For official COVID-19 information visit: www.swpublichealth.ca