



Frequently Asked Questions about Coronavirus (COVID-19), Pregnancy, and Breastfeeding

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a new illness that affects the lungs and breathing. It is caused by a new coronavirus. The majority of persons experience mild to moderate symptoms, but 5% may require critical care and admission to a hospital. Symptoms may appear 2 to 14 days after you are exposed to the virus. Some people may have no symptoms.

Symptoms may include:

- Fever, chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or trouble breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- Stomach problems, such as nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea
- Loss of your sense of smell or taste
- Sore throat, congestion, or runny nose
- Worsening of a chronic medical condition

How does COVID-19 affect pregnant women? Will pregnant women become more sick than others?

Researcher are still learning how COVID-19 affects pregnant women. Current reports suggest that pregnant women have a higher risk for more severe illness from COVID-19 than non-pregnant women. Reports note that:

- Pregnant women who have COVID-19 and show symptoms are more likely than nonpregnant women with COVID-19 and symptoms to need care in an intensive care unit (ICU), to need a ventilator, or to die from the illness. The overall increased risk of these outcomes for pregnant women compared to nonpregnant women is small.

- Pregnant women with some health conditions, such as obesity or gestational diabetes or hypertension, may have an even higher risk of severe illness, similar to nonpregnant women with these conditions.
- Pregnant women who are Black or Hispanic have a higher rate of illness and death from COVID-19 than other pregnant women. This may be due to more social, health, and economic inequities that put them at greater risk of illness.

How can COVID-19 affect a fetus?

Researchers are learning more about COVID-19 and the possible effects on the fetus. Here's what they know now:

- Researchers have found a few cases of COVID-19 that may have passed to a fetus during the pregnancy, but this seems to be rare.
- Some studies suggest there may be an increased risk of preterm birth and stillbirth for some women with COVID-19. Other studies have not found this to be true, but information is still limited. Researchers are continuing to study these outcomes to better understand the effects of COVID-19 before birth.
- After birth, a newborn can get the virus if they are exposed to it.

What should pregnant women do to avoid COVID-19?

The virus spreads mainly from person-to-person contact. Pregnant women can take the same steps as other people to protect themselves, including:

- Keep your prenatal care appointments
- Limit contact with other people as possible, especially those who are sick
- Staying at least 6 feet away from other people if you need to go out
- Wearing a mask or cloth face covering in public and any other needed protection while at work
- Washing hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- If unable to wash hands, then cleaning hands with a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol (rub until your hands feel dry)
- Avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth
- Having a good stock of essential supplies, including 30 days of any medications (so you do not have to go out as often)
- Talk with your OB-GYN provider if you have any questions about your health or COVID-19
- If you have COVID-19 or think you may have it, you should wear a mask while you are around other people. You should also wear a mask if you are taking care of someone who has COVID-19 or has symptoms.

See all of the prevention tips from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

How will COVID-19 affect prenatal and postpartum care visits?

Voyage Healthcare has made some changes to protect the safety and health of our patients, staff, community, and providers. These changes include:

- It is important to keep your prenatal and postpartum care visits.
- Low Risk OB Care: Some low risk women may have fewer or more spaced out in-person visits.
- Phone or Virtual Visits: You also may talk more with your healthcare team over the phone or through an online video call. This is called telemedicine or telehealth. It is a good way for you to get the care you need while preventing the spread of disease.
If you have a Virtual Visit scheduled, our office will call you ahead of time and/or you may receive an e-mail. You will receive details about your Virtual Visit.
- Universal COVID-19 Screening: If you have an appointment in the office, a staff-person will talk to you to make sure you do not have symptoms of COVID-19. If you have symptoms, they will connect you to our hotline for next steps.
- Masks are required for in-person visits. You may call our office before your appointment to ask about the current support-person policy. These policies may be changing depending on the level of COVID-19 spread in the community.

What should I do if I am pregnant and think I have COVID-19?

If you think you may have been exposed to COVID-19 and have fever, cough, or other symptoms, call Voyage Healthcare's Coronavirus hotline at 763-587-7900 (and press 5 when prompted) to speak to our clinical team and discuss your symptoms and a plan of care. After 5 o'clock: call our OB-GYN triage line 763-587-7916.

If you have emergency warning signs, call 911 or go to the hospital right away.

Emergency warning signs include the following:

- Having a hard time breathing or shortness of breath (more than what has been normal for you during pregnancy) i.e. inability to walk across the room or talk without stopping to rest due to shortness of breath
- Ongoing pain or pressure in the chest
- Sudden confusion or being unable to respond to others
- Blue lips or face
- If you go to the hospital, try to call ahead to let them know you are coming so they can prepare. If you have other symptoms that worry you, call the clinic line to talk to the OB-GYN doctor on call.

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

If you are diagnosed with COVID-19, follow the advice from the CDC and your ob-gyn or other health care professional.

The current CDC advice for all people with COVID-19 includes the following:

- Stay home except to get medical care. Avoid public transportation.
- Speak with your health care team over the phone before going to their office. Get medical care right away if you feel worse or think it's an emergency.
- Separate yourself from other people in your home and avoid sharing personal household items.
- Wear a face mask when you are around other people and when you go to get medical care.

Should I make any changes to my labor and delivery plans?

- Talk with your ob-gyn provider about your labor and delivery plans. In most cases, the timing and method of delivery (vaginal birth or cesarean birth) do not need to be changed. Check with your ob-gyn provider if you have questions about your birth plan. Women who are mildly ill do not automatically need a cesarean birth.
- Upon admission to the hospital for delivery, all pregnant women will receive a rapid test for SARS-CoV2 (dependent on available tests). Testing allows your health care team to wear the appropriate personal protective equipment and to take other steps to prevent spread of infection during and after labor and delivery.
- Your baby may need to be separated from you after birth if you test positive or are sick. The separation helps to prevent you from infecting your baby. Talk with your care team about this possibility.
- If you are scheduled for a planned induction of labor or a planned C-section delivery, a SARS-CoV2 test will be scheduled in the week prior to admission. Your provider will provide you with details on testing.
- Nitrous oxide is available as a pain relief option if you have a negative SARS-CoV2 test on admission. (policy subject to change).

How many visitors can I have during and after birth?

- Visitors in the hospital may or may not be allowed, depending on level of community spread—ask your provider about the current policies.
- However, if admitted, a patient is allowed one healthy support person with her through labor and postpartum recovery (*this may or may not be the same person for the duration of the hospital stay). A newborn baby or baby that must remain in the NICU may also have one healthy parent.

Would it be safer to have a home birth?

The safest place for you to give birth is still a hospital or hospital-based birth center. COVID-19 has not changed this recommendation.

- Even the healthiest pregnancies can have problems arise with little or no warning during labor and delivery (such as heavy bleeding, fever, or abnormal fetal heart rate monitoring). If problems happen, a hospital setting can give you and your baby the best care in a hurry.
- Keep in mind that hospitals follow strict procedures to clean and control infection.

What will happen during labor and delivery if I have COVID-19?

You will need to wear a mask while you are in the hospital if you have COVID-19. If you are pushing during labor, wearing a mask may be difficult. For this reason, your health care team will be wearing masks, gowns, and eye protection to reduce risk of spreading the virus.

Where will my baby stay after delivery if I have COVID-19?

There are benefits to having your baby stay in the same room as you after delivery, even if you have COVID-19. Rooming together may help you bond with your baby and help you start breast feeding, if desired.

You also may choose for your baby to stay separated from you, such as in the hospital nursery. Current reports suggest that the risk of a baby getting COVID-19 does not change based upon whether the baby stays in the mother's room or in a separate room. If you room together, the baby's bassinet may be kept at least 6 feet away from you. Sometimes a clear plastic crib that is enclosed and helps the baby maintain an even temperature may be used.

Staying in a separate room may be encouraged if you are very sick or your baby is at high risk of getting very sick. If you choose to be separated and you plan to breastfeed, a breast pump will be provided. This will allow someone who is not sick to bottle feed the breast milk to your baby. Pumping will also help maintain a milk supply for later breastfeeding.

You can talk to the healthcare team about the options and discuss what you feel is right for you and your baby.

Can COVID-19 pass to a baby through breast milk?

Researchers are still learning if COVID-19 can pass through breast milk and cause infection to the baby. Most information shows that it is safe to feed breast milk to your baby when you have COVID-19. Breast milk is the best source of nutrition for most babies and provides protection from infections, including infections of the ears, lungs, and digestive systems.

Talk with your health care providers about whether to start or continue breastfeeding. You can make this individualized decision together with your family and the health care team.

How can I avoid passing COVID-19 to my baby?

If you have symptoms of COVID-19 or if you have a positive test, you can take the following steps to avoid passing the infection to your baby:

- Wash your hands before touching your baby. [See the CDC's handwashing tips.](#)
- Wear a face mask or covering when holding your baby, including while breastfeeding. Do not put a mask or covering over the baby's face.
- Wash your hands before touching any breast pump or bottle parts and clean all pump and bottle parts after use. [See the CDC's advice for cleaning a breast pump.](#)
- If possible, let someone healthy help care for your newborn. They can bottle-feed your breast milk to your baby after you pump. They should wear a mask and keep hands clean. Also, this person should not be at risk of severe illness from COVID-19.

What should I do if I could be exposed to COVID-19 at work?

Tell your employer if you are pregnant or have a health condition that may put you at higher risk (diabetes, lung disease, obesity).

Talk with your employer about how you can stay safe while doing your job. Ask if remote work is possible. If remote work is not possible, and you work in a job with a high risk of exposure, ask your employer if you can switch to a role with lower exposure risk.

No matter what your job is, your employer should follow guidelines from the CDC and state health departments to reduce the risk of infection for employees. Ask your employer about masks or other protective equipment. Talk to your OB provider if you have additional concerns about protection at work.

Can I travel if I am pregnant?

Travel recommendations may change often. See the [CDC's Coronavirus Disease 2019 Information for Travel page](#) for the latest updates.

Other travel recommendations may be in place globally or locally as the virus continues to spread. Check with your local or state health department for information about travel in your area.

How can I stay physically healthy right now? Pregnant women can stay healthy by following the usual recommendations during pregnancy, including:

- Eating healthy meals
- Exercising regularly (though be mindful to stay at home or away from other people while exercising)
- Getting plenty of sleep
- Avoiding alcohol and drugs, including marijuana

How can I manage stress and anxiety?

Some pregnant and postpartum women may be feeling increased fear, uncertainty, stress, or anxiety because of COVID-19. The above tips for staying physically healthy also can help your mental health. Reaching out to friends and family during this time may help. Phone calls, texts or online chats such as Facetime or Zoom are safe ways to stay connected. Consider taking breaks from COVID-19 news and social media.

Telling your ob-gyn or other health care professional if you have symptoms such as:

- feeling sad, hopeless, worthless, or helpless
- having fear or worry that causes a very fast heartbeat or shortness of breath
- feeling that life is not worth living
- Having repeated, scary, and unwanted thoughts that are hard to get rid of

** If you are in crisis or feel like you want to harm yourself or others, call 911 right away.

If you or a loved one are feeling overwhelmed, you can call the Disaster Distress Helpline run by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) at 1-800-985-5990 (TTY 1-800-846-8517). You also can text TalkWithUs to 66746. If you feel like you want to harm yourself or others, call 911 right away. [Find more mental health advice and resources from the CDC.](#)

Times of crisis can be very hard for people in abusive relationships. Abuse at home is known as intimate partner violence or [domestic violence](#). Abuse can get worse during pregnancy. If you need help, call the 24-hour, toll-free National Domestic Violence

Hotline: 800-799-SAFE (7233) and 800-787-3224 (TTY). Or you can use the live chat option at <https://www.thehotline.org/>.

What if I have questions about working, visits to my doctor, or anything else related to COVID-19?

Call Voyage Healthcare. We are your main resource for all questions about your pregnancy. Questions about your workplace are best answered by your employer. For other questions about COVID-19, you can check CDC web pages, which are updated often and listed below.

Resources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#): A hub for the latest information on what everyone needs to know about the coronavirus and COVID-19.
- [Pregnancy & Breastfeeding](#): More information about COVID-19, pregnancy, and breastfeeding.
- [Prevent getting sick](#): Learn how the virus spreads and how to protect yourself and your family.
- [If You Are Sick](#): Guidance on what to do if you have COVID-19 or think you may have it.
- [Travel](#): Frequently asked questions for travelers and travel notices for each country.

Postpartum Support International Helpline

<https://www.postpartum.net> or call 800-944-4773

Text 503-894-9453 (English) or 971-420-0294 (Spanish)

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