

Women's Health and Wellness

Pregnancy can be a stressful time for everyone. Being pregnant while working in healthcare at the best of times can be challenging and can be downright terrifying during a pandemic.

This summary gives the answers to many questions you may have about COVID-19 and pregnancy as well as some reliable places to get health facts about COVID and pregnancy.

Please keep in mind that information about COVID-19 in general, and information about pregnancy and COVID-19 is changing quickly.

Is it safe for me to work during the COVID-19 pandemic during pregnancy?

Given the limited amount of information we have about COVID-19 infections during pregnancy, it is recommended that healthcare facilities take care to limit the exposure of pregnancy employees to patients with confirmed or suspected COVID-19, especially during higher risk procedures (aerosol-generating procedures) if feasible based on staffing availability.

Of course, you should always adhere to infection control guidelines regardless of if you are pregnant or not. While working, be sure to follow the [risk assessment](#) and [infection control](#) guidelines from the CDC.

Are pregnant women more susceptible to infection, or at higher risk for severe illness, morbidity or mortality with COVID-19, compared with the general public?

There are biologic changes during pregnancy that affect the immune system and many respiratory illnesses (like influenza) are more serious in pregnant women.

According to information we have from other countries, pregnant women do not seem more likely to become infected with COVID-19. There does not seem to be worse outcomes than those who are not pregnant.

[Recent data](#) from the United States lists pregnancy as a risk factor for severe disease with COVID-19 but this is based on very limited numbers: “for some underlying health conditions and risk factors, including ... pregnancy, few severe outcomes were reported; therefore, conclusions cannot be drawn about the risk for severe COVID-19 among persons in these groups.”

Are pregnant women with COVID-19 at a higher risk for pregnancy complications?

Early reports based on a very small number of women in China did not show a higher than expected rate of miscarriage or stillbirth in women with COVID-19. There may be a

higher risk of preterm delivery for women with severe respiratory symptoms. There may also be a higher chance of needing a cesarean delivery. From reports, it seems that the individuals who delivered preterm were those with more significant respiratory compromise.

There seems to be an increased risk for thromboembolic disease (DVT/PE) for all individuals with COVID infections including those that are not pregnant. Pregnancy also increases the risk for blood clots. For these reasons, if you do become infected with COVID, your provider may ask you to take medications to prevent blood clots (aspirin and heparin). More recent [reports](#) show placental changes that could lead to growth problems in the fetus or could result in hypertensive complications.

Is it safe to deliver my baby in a hospital where there are cases of COVID-19?

Rest assured that our birth center (as well as those in [all of the hospitals in the country](#)) are doing everything we can to minimize the risks for you and your baby during this pandemic. This includes both [how we provide prenatal care and how we care for you and your baby in the hospital](#).

Unfortunately, this means limiting visitors at both prenatal appointments and in the hospital. ***We recognize that this is disappointing for many but feel it is necessary for your safety and that of your baby.***

Please note that ambulance service may be slowed due to the pandemic. We do not usually recommend using an ambulance for labor but there are times when it is required. Please think about this when planning your delivery.

Can pregnant women who are infected with COVID-19 pass the infection to their fetus during pregnancy (vertical transmission)?

Vertical transmission includes passing on infection from a mother to her fetus or newborn before, during, or immediately after delivery. This could occur from the infection crossing the placenta, exposure to maternal body fluids during delivery or through breastmilk.

Information in this area is very limited. There has recently been a [report](#) of vertical transmission of COVID-19. This still seems to be a rare occurrence but, unfortunately, the infant in the report did have at least temporary neurologic findings presumed to be due to COVID-19 infection. If you have infection with COVID-19 at the time of delivery it is recommended that your baby be isolated from you for the baby's protection. While COVID-19 illness is often less severe and less life threatening in children, there have been reports of newborns contracting COVID-19 after birth and unfortunately infant

deaths from COVID-19. The coronavirus has not been isolated in breastmilk from infected women so it is thought that breastfeeding (with strict precautions) or pumping breastmilk and feeding via bottle is probably safe. There is, of course, no information on long-term health risks of maternal infection on the fetus/baby since this is a new virus.

Can women who are infected with COVID-19 pass the infection to their baby during delivery?

Strict isolation from the baby is the surest way to prevent your baby getting COVID-19 if you have it. This risk has to be balanced against the need for you to be with your baby and your baby to be with you. If you are infected when your baby is born and prefer not to isolate, we will teach you how to safely care for your baby. If you are too sick to care for your baby, we will make sure your baby is cared for well while you cannot.

Can women who are infected with COVID-19 pass the infection to their baby through breastmilk?

The coronavirus has not been isolated in breastmilk from infected women. It is thought that breastfeeding is safe with strict infection prevention precautions and breast feeding is still recommended. It is also likely safe to pump breastmilk and feed via bottle with proper precautions.

Additional Resources

These resources provide medically accurate information about COVID-19 and pregnancy:

- **Babycenter**
[This summary](#) of commonly asked questions about COVID-19 and pregnancy was jointly developed with the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine (a national organization of high risk pregnancy specialists). It offers information in language that most people can understand.
- **Centers for Disease Control (CDC)**
There is a lot of information about [COVID-19 in general](#), [COVID-19 for healthcare workers](#), and [COVID-19 and pregnancy](#) here.
- **American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG)**
[Patient information](#)