

COVID-19 Update



Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pregnancy FAQs for Patients

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5-SECOND SUMMARY

We asked parents-to-be to send us their most pressing questions about coronavirus (COVID-19). Among them: Is it still safe to deliver in a hospital? What if my ob-gyn has the virus? We sent those questions to the top docs at the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine. Here are their answers.

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has been declared a national emergency in the United States by the president. Moms-to-be like you are concerned about everything from getting medicines to managing disruptions at work. But above and beyond any worry about lifestyle changes is a focus on your health and the impact of COVID-19 on your pregnancy.

We asked obstetrics doctors who handle the most complicated pregnancy issues to answer your questions about the coronavirus. Here are their responses, provided by Dr. Sarah Dotters-Katz and her colleagues at the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine.

Am I at more risk for COVID-19 if I'm pregnant?

We don't know. Pregnancy does change your immune system in ways that might make you more susceptible to viral respiratory infections like COVID-19. If you become infected, you might also be at higher risk for more severe illness compared to the general population. Although this does not appear to be the case with COVID-19, based on limited data so far, a higher risk has been true for pregnant women with other coronavirus infections (SARS-CoV and MERS-CoV) and other viral respiratory infections, such as flu. It's important to take preventive actions to avoid infection, such as washing your hands often and avoiding people who are sick.

How might coronavirus affect my pregnancy?

Again, we don't know. Women with other coronavirus infections (such as SARS-CoV) did not have miscarriage or stillbirth at higher rates than the general population. We know that having other respiratory viral infections during pregnancy, such as flu, has been associated with problems like low birth weight and preterm birth. Also, having a high fever early in pregnancy may increase the risk of certain birth defects.

Could I transmit coronavirus to my baby during pregnancy or delivery?

We don't know whether you could transmit COVID-19 to your baby before or during delivery. However, among the few case studies of infants born to mothers with COVID-19 published in peer-reviewed literature, none of the infants tested positive for the virus. Also, there was no virus detected in samples of amniotic fluid or breast milk. There have been a few reports of newborns as young as a few days old with infection, suggesting that a mother can transmit the infection to her infant through close contact after delivery. There have been no reports of mother-to-baby transmission for other coronaviruses (MERS-CoV and SARS-CoV), although only limited information is available.

Is it safe for me to deliver at a hospital where there have been COVID-19 cases?

Yes. We know that COVID-19 is a very scary virus. The good news is that hospitals are taking great precautions to keep patients and healthcare providers safe. When a patient is even suspected to have COVID-19, they are placed in a negative pressure room. (Think of these rooms as vacuums that suck and filter the air so it's safe for the other people in the hospital). This makes it possible for you to deliver at the hospital without putting you or your baby at risk. Hospitals are also implementing stricter visiting policies to keep patients safe. It's worth calling your hospital to check if there are any new regulations to be aware of.

What plans should I make now in case the hospital system is overwhelmed when it's time for me to deliver?

This is a great question to talk with your doctor or midwife about when you're 34 to 36 weeks pregnant. Every hospital is making different plans for dealing with this scenario.

I work in healthcare. Should I ask my doctor to excuse me from work until the baby is born? What if I work in a school, the travel industry, or some other high-risk setting?

Healthcare facilities should take care to limit the exposure of pregnant employees to patients with confirmed or suspected COVID-19, just as they would with other infectious cases. If you continue working, be sure to follow the CDC's risk assessment and infection control guidelines.

If you work in a school, travel industry, or other high-risk setting, talk with your employer about what it's doing to protect employees and minimize infection risks. Wash your hands often.

Beaumont Health has an HR policy in place for employees who are potentially at high-risk for complications of COVID-19. If you are pregnant and concerned about possible work-related exposure to COVID-19, please contact your local human resources representative.

What if my OB gets COVID-19?

If your doctor or midwife tests positive for COVID-19, they will need to be quarantined until they recover and are no longer at risk of transmitting the virus. In this case, you'll be assigned to another OB in your doctor's practice (or you may choose another practitioner yourself). Ask your new OB or your doctor's office if you should self-quarantine or be tested for the virus. (It will depend on when you last saw your provider and when that person tested positive.)

Should we hold off on trying to conceive because of COVID-19?

At this time, there's no reason to hold off on trying to get pregnant, but the data we have is really limited. For example, we don't think the virus causes birth defects or increases your risk of miscarriage. But we don't know whether you could transmit COVID-19 to your baby before or during delivery. We also don't know if the virus lives in semen or can be sexually transmitted.

We have a babymoon scheduled in the next few months – should we cancel?

If you're planning to travel internationally or on a cruise, you should strongly consider canceling. At this time, the virus has reached more than 140 countries, and there are travel bans to China, most of Europe, and Iran. Places where large numbers of people gather are at highest risk, especially airports and cruise ships. If you're planning travel in the U.S., note that any travel setting increases your risk of exposure, and there may be travel bans even in America by the time you're scheduled to go. Even if you're state is not blocked, you'll definitely want to avoid traveling to communities where the virus is spreading. To find out where these places are, check The New York Times map based on CDC data. For the most current advice to help you avoid exposure, check the CDC's COVID-19 travel page.

Will the hospital separate me from my newborn and keep the baby in quarantine?

If you test positive for COVID-19 or have been exposed but have no symptoms, the CDC, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, and the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine all recommend that you be separated from your baby to decrease the risk of transmission to the baby. This would last until you are no longer at risk of transmitting the virus.

If you do not have COVID-19 and have not been exposed to the virus, the hospital will not separate you from your newborn.

Beaumont Health is restricting visitors and only allowing one support person. If my support person leaves after the delivery, will they be allowed to come back?

Beaumont Health has a visitor restriction policy in place, and that guidance is subject to change based on the evolving pandemic. In general, if your support person needs to leave, they would be allowed back unless they knew they were exposed to COVID-19 after leaving your company. They would also not be allowed to visit if they were acutely ill.

BabyCenter understands that the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is an evolving story and that your questions will change over time. We'll continue asking moms and dads in our Community what they want to know, and we'll get the answers from experts to keep them – and you – informed and supported.

My mom was planning to fly here to help me care for my new baby after delivery. Should I tell her not to come?

Yes. If your mom is over 60 or has any serious chronic medical conditions (such as heart disease, lung disease, or diabetes), she is at higher risk of serious illness from COVID-19 and should avoid air travel. And remember that any travel setting increases a person's risk of exposure. So, it may be risky to have her around the baby after she has been traveling.

For the most current advice on traveling, check the CDC's COVID-19 travel page.

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