Pregnancy and COVID-19

Coronavirus disease, also called COVID-19, is an infection of the lungs and airways (*respiratory tract*). It is unclear at this time if pregnancy makes it more likely for you to get COVID-19, or what effects the infection may have on your unborn baby. However, pregnancy causes changes to your heart, lungs, and the body's disease-fighting system (*immune system*). Some of these changes make it more likely for you to get sick and have more serious illness. Therefore, it is important for you to take precautions in order to protect yourself and your unborn baby.

Work with your health care team to develop a plan to protect yourself from all infections, including COVID-19. This is one way for you to stay healthy during your pregnancy and to keep your baby healthy as well.

How does this affect me?

If you get COVID-19, there is a risk that you may:

* Get a respiratory illness that can lead to pneumonia.
* Give birth to your baby before 37 weeks of pregnancy (*premature birth*).

If you have or may have COVID-19, your health care provider may recommend special precautions around your pregnancy. This may affect how you:

* Receive care before delivery (*prenatal care*). How you visit your health care provider may change. Tests and scans may need to be performed differently.
* Receive care during labor and delivery. This may affect your birth plan, including who may be with you during labor and delivery.
* Receive care after you deliver your baby (*postpartum care*). You may stay longer in the hospital, and in a special room. Your baby may also need to stay away from you.
* Feed your baby after he or she is born.

Pregnancy can be an especially stressful time because of the changes in your body and the preparation involved in becoming a parent. In addition, you may be feeling especially fearful, anxious, or stressed because of COVID-19 and how it is affecting you.

How does this affect my baby?

It is not known whether a mother will transmit the virus to her unborn baby. There is a risk that if you get COVID-19:

* The virus that causes COVID-19 can pass to your baby.
* You may have premature birth. Your baby may require more medical care if this happens.

What can I do to lower my risk?

There is no vaccine to help prevent COVID-19. However, there are actions that you can take to protect yourself and others from this virus.

Cleaning and personal hygiene

* Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
* Avoid touching your mouth, face, eyes, or nose.

- Clean and disinfect objects and surfaces that are frequently touched every day. This may include:
  ◦ Counters and tables.
  ◦ Doorknobs and light switches.
  ◦ Sinks and faucets.
  ◦ Electronics such as phones, remote controls, keyboards, computers, and tablets.

Stay away from others

- Stay away from people who are sick, if possible.
- Avoid social gatherings and travel.
- Stay home as much as possible.

Follow these instructions:

Breastfeeding

It is not known if the virus that causes COVID-19 can pass through breast milk to your baby. You should make a plan for feeding your infant with your family and your health care team.

If you have or may have COVID-19, your health care provider may recommend that you take precautions while breastfeeding, such as:

- Washing your hands before feeding your baby.
- Wearing a mask while feeding your baby.
- Pumping or expressing breast milk to feed to your baby. If possible, ask someone in your household who is not sick to feed your baby the expressed breast milk.
  ◦ Wash your hands before touching pump parts.
  ◦ Wash and disinfect all pump parts after expressing milk. Follow the manufacturer's instructions to clean and disinfect all pump parts.

General instructions

- If you think you have a COVID-19 infection, contact your health care provider right away. Tell your health care provider that you think you may have a COVID-19 infection.
- Follow your health care provider's instructions on taking medicines. Some medicines may be unsafe to take during pregnancy.
- Cover your mouth and nose by wearing a mask or other cloth covering over your face when you go out in public.
- Find ways to manage stress. These may include:
  ◦ Using relaxation techniques like meditation and deep breathing.
  ◦ Getting regular exercise. Most women can continue their usual exercise routine during pregnancy. Ask your health care provider what activities are safe for you.
  ◦ Seeking support from family, friends, or spiritual resources. If you cannot be together in person, you can still connect by phone calls, texts, video calls, or online messaging.
  ◦ Spending time doing relaxing activities that you enjoy, like listening to music or reading a good book.
- Ask for help if you have counseling or nutritional needs during pregnancy. Your health care provider can offer advice or refer you to resources or specialists who can help you with various needs.
- Keep all follow-up visits as told by your health care provider. This is important.

Where to find more information

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/

- World Health Organization (WHO):
  www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-on-covid-19-pregnancy-childbirth-and-breastfeeding
- American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG):
  www.acog.org/patient-resources/faqs/pregnancy/coronavirus-pregnancy-and-breastfeeding

Questions to ask your health care team

- What should I do if I have COVID-19 symptoms?
- How will COVID-19 affect my prenatal care visits, tests and scans, labor and delivery, and postpartum care?
- Should I plan to breastfeed my baby?
- Where can I find mental health resources?
- Where can I find support if I have financial concerns?

Contact a health care provider if:

- You have signs and symptoms of infection, including a fever or cough. Tell your health care team that you think you may have a COVID-19 infection.
- You have strong emotions, such as sadness or anxiety.
- You feel unsafe in your home and need help finding a safe place to live.
- You have bloody or watery vaginal discharge or vaginal bleeding.

Get help right away if:

- You have signs or symptoms of labor before 37 weeks of pregnancy. These include:
  ◦ Contractions that are 5 minutes or less apart, or that increase in frequency, intensity, or length.
  ◦ Sudden, sharp pain in the abdomen or in the lower back.
  ◦ A gush or trickle of fluid from your vagina.
- You have difficulty breathing.
- You have chest pain.

These symptoms may represent a serious problem that is an emergency. Do not wait to see if the symptoms will go away. Get medical help right away. Call your local emergency services (911 in the U.S.). Do not drive yourself to the hospital.

Summary

- Coronavirus disease, also called COVID-19, is an infection of the lungs and airways (*respiratory tract*). It is unclear at this time if pregnancy makes you more susceptible to COVID-19 and what effects it may have on unborn babies.
- It is important to take precautions to protect yourself and your developing baby. This includes washing your hands often, avoiding touching your mouth, face, eyes, or nose, avoiding social gatherings and travel, and staying away from people who are sick.
- If you think you have a COVID-19 infection, contact your health care provider right away. Tell your health care provider that you think you may have a COVID-19 infection.
- If you have or may have COVID-19, your health care provider may recommend special precautions during your pregnancy, labor and delivery, and after your baby is born.

This information is not intended to replace advice given to you by your health care provider. Make sure you discuss any questions you have with your health care provider.