



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

Please note the following recommendations and policy updates.

1. **One Visitor per Patient:** Effective immediately, for the safety of our patients and staff, NO visitors are allowed in the clinic.

Exceptions:

- ONE visitor is allowed to accompany patient to a 1<sup>st</sup> trimester dating/viability appointment.
- ONE visitor is allowed to accompany the patient to an ultrasound appointment for 20-week OB ultrasound appointments.
- BOTH parents are allowed for newborn appointments.

2. We recommend wearing a mask to your appointment (as well as your accompanying visitor).

3. Starting May 4, 2020, all patients admitted to the hospital or admitted for labor and delivery, will be tested for the rapid COVID-19 virus. The test will provide a result within 2 hours; this testing is to help determine appropriate personal protective equipment for providers while taking care of patients in the hospital. The COVID 19 testing in no way will testing impact a patient's obstetrical care.

4. You may want to discuss with your employer your options for not working or working exclusively from home during the last 2-3 weeks of your pregnancy. This would be to reduce chances of infection during labor and delivery.

### 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.

#### **Common signs of the infection include:**

- Fever
- Cough
- Diarrhea
- Headache

- Vomiting
- Body Aches
- Sore Throat
- Shortness of breath
- Loss of taste or smell
- Difficulty breathing

## How does COVID-19 affect pregnant women? Is it easier for pregnant women to become ill with the disease or will they become more sick than other people?

We do not currently know if pregnant women have a greater chance of getting sick from COVID-19 than the general public nor whether they are more likely to have serious illness as a result. Researchers are still learning how the illness affects pregnant women. Pregnant women experience changes in their bodies that may increase their risk of some infections. With viruses from the same family as COVID-19, and other viral respiratory infections, such as influenza, women have had a higher risk of developing severe illness. It is always important for pregnant women to protect themselves from illnesses and should take the same steps as the general public to avoid COVID-19.

## 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:

- 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)
- Cover your mouth and nose with your elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth
- Staying home as much as possible
- Staying at least 6 feet away from other people if you need to go out
- Avoiding people who are sick

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

## How can COVID-19 affect a fetus?

It's too early for researchers to know what, if any, risk is posed to infants of a pregnant woman who has COVID-19. There has been a small number of reported problems during pregnancy and delivery in pregnant women with COVID-19 (such as **preterm** birth). However, it is not clear whether the problems were because of COVID-19 infection.

## Can COVID-19 be passed from a pregnant woman to the fetus or newborn?

We still do not know if a pregnant woman with COVID-19 can pass the virus that causes COVID-19 to her fetus or baby during pregnancy or delivery. At this time, no infants born to

mothers with COVID-19 have tested positive for the COVID-19 virus. In these cases, which are a small number, the virus was not found in samples of amniotic fluid or breastmilk. Researchers may know more in the coming months.

### Should pregnant women wear a face mask?

Pregnant women who are feeling well do not need to wear a mask. If you have COVID-19 or have symptoms, you should wear a mask while you are around other people. You also should wear a mask if you are taking care of someone who has COVID-19 or has symptoms.

### 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:

- Low Risk OB Care: Some low risk women may have fewer or more spaced out in-person visits.
- Virtual Visits: You also may have a Virtual Visit where you meet with your provider through an online video call. This is called a telehealth visit or telemedicine. 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.

### 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

## 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
- Wear a face mask when you are around other people and when you go to get medical care
- Avoid sharing personal household items
- Clean all high touch surfaces in your home daily
- Call if symptoms have not improved in 5-7 days

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

North Memorial Healthcare and Maple Grove Hospital have been adjusting their policies. Changes have included:

- Visitors in the hospital are no longer allowed. However, if a woman is admitted for labor and delivery, she is allowed one healthy support person with her through labor and postpartum recovery (\*this must be the same person for the duration of her hospital stay). A newborn baby or baby that must remain in the NICU may also have one healthy parent
- Nitrous oxide is no longer in use due to COVID-19 exposure risks

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.

If you are sick, you do not automatically need a cesarean birth. But your health care team will wear masks or take other steps to prevent spreading the infection during and after labor and delivery. Your baby may need to be separated from you after birth if you are sick. The separation helps to prevent you from infecting your baby. Talk with your care team about this possibility.

## 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.

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. And

studies have shown that babies born at home are more than twice as likely to die around the time of birth than those born in hospitals.

Every woman has the right to choose where she will give birth. But it is important to not take any risks that might put you or your newborn's health in danger, especially as there is a high risk for getting COVID-19. Talk with your ob-gyn or other health care professional about your birth plan and any concerns.

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

So far, the virus has not been found in breast milk. But there is not enough information yet on whether women who are sick can pass the virus through breast milk.

Breast milk gives babies protection against many illnesses. It also is the best source of nutrition for most infants. However, much is unknown about COVID-19. Currently, the CDC recommends breastfeeding. 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 been diagnosed, 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 while breastfeeding if possible
- 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.](#)
- You also can have someone who is not sick feed your breast milk to your baby after you pump

### 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

### How can I manage stress and anxiety?

Being home a lot and avoiding other people can be hard. The above tips for staying physically healthy also can help your mental health.

A few other things you can do to stay mentally healthy include:

- Staying connected with your friends and family, over the phone or online
- Taking breaks from COVID-19 news and social media
- Telling your ob-gyn or other health care professional if you are feeling sad or anxious

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/>.

### Can I travel if I am pregnant?

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.

### 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.
- [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.

\*\*adapted from ACOG and CDC resources for Voyage Healthcare.