

# COVID-19 Advice for Pregnant Women

**Columbus Public Health recommends that women who are pregnant contact their health care providers as early as possible if they are sick.**

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) provides answers to questions about COVID-19 and pregnancy:

**Q: What is the risk to pregnant women of getting COVID-19? Is it easier for pregnant women to become ill with the disease? If they become infected, will they be sicker than other people?**

A: It is always important for pregnant women to protect themselves from illnesses. Pregnant women experience changes in their bodies that may increase their risk of some infections. Women have had a higher risk of developing severe illnesses from viruses within the same family as COVID-19 and other viral respiratory infections such as influenza. A Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR) study suggests that pregnant women with COVID-19 are more likely to be hospitalized and are at increased risk for intensive care unit (ICU) admission and receipt of mechanical ventilation than non-pregnant women. Risk of death is similar for both groups. But much remains unknown.

**Q: Can COVID-19 cause problems for pregnancy?**

A: It is not known at this time if COVID-19 would cause problems during pregnancy or affect the health of the baby after birth.

**Q: If a pregnant woman has COVID-19 during pregnancy, will it hurt the baby?**

A: It is currently not known at this time what if any risk is posed to infants of a pregnant woman who has COVID-19. There have been a small number of reported problems with pregnancy or delivery (e.g., preterm birth) in babies born to mothers who tested positive for COVID-19 during their pregnancy. However, it is not clear that these outcomes were related to maternal infection.

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

A: It is still not known if a pregnant woman with COVID-19 can pass the virus that causes COVID-19 to her fetus. Newborns can be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 if they come in close contact with an infected person after birth. It is unknown if these newborns got the virus before, during or after birth. In these cases, which are a small number, the virus was not found in samples of amniotic fluid or breastmilk.

**Q: How can pregnant women protect themselves from getting COVID-19?**

Pregnant women should do the same things as the general public to avoid infection and help stop the spread of COVID-19 by taking these actions:

- Do not skip your prenatal or postpartum care appointments.
- Receiving some vaccines during pregnancy, such as the influenza (flu) and Tdap vaccines, can help protect you and your baby. If you are pregnant, you should continue to receive your recommended vaccines. Talk with your healthcare provider about visits for vaccines during pregnancy.
- You may feel increased stress during this pandemic. Fear and anxiety can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions. Seek care immediately if you have a medical emergency.
- Some healthcare providers might choose to cancel or postpone some visits. Others may switch certain appointments to telemedicine visits, which are appointments over the phone or video. These decisions will be based on the circumstances in your community as well as your individual care plan.
- Make sure that you have at least a 30-day supply of your medicines.
- Limit your interactions with other people as much as possible by practicing social distancing and staying home or at least 6 feet away from people who do not live in your home.
- Wear a mask and avoid touching your face when out in public.
- Avoid gatherings of more than 10 people.
- Cover coughs and sneezes using your elbow or a tissue, and wash your hands after doing so.
- Clean and then disinfect frequently touched surfaces and objects.
- Wash hands often using soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.

## **COVID-19 symptoms include:**

- Fever ( $\geq 100.4^{\circ}\text{F}$ )
- Cough
- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Fatigue
- Headaches
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Body aches,
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

## Q: Can a woman breastfeed if she has confirmed COVID-19 or is showing symptoms?

Whether and how to start or continue breastfeeding should be determined by the mother in coordination with her family and healthcare providers. A mother with confirmed COVID-19 or who has symptoms of COVID-19 should take all possible precautions to avoid spreading the virus to her infant, including washing her hands before touching the infant and wearing a facemask, if possible, while feeding at the breast. If expressing breast milk with a manual or electric breast pump, the mother should wash her hands before touching any pump or bottle parts and follow recommendations for proper pump cleaning after each use. If possible, expressed breast milk should be bottle fed to the infant by a healthy caregiver who does not have COVID-19, is not at high risk for severe illness from COVID-19, and is living in the same home.

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