

COVID-19 in Pregnancy

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Patient Educational Resources: <https://obgynacademy.com/covid-19/>



Coronaviruses are a family of viruses that cause disease in mammals and birds. COVID-19, or coronavirus disease 2019, is an infection caused by a virus called SARS-COV-2. This is a new type of coronavirus that causes respiratory like illness in humans. It was first identified in China in December 2019 and has spread worldwide. On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a pandemic.



How is COVID-19 Spread?

COVID-19 is spread by touching surfaces contaminated by virus and then touching your face before washing hands. **It is so important to WASH YOUR HANDS!!!** The surfaces get contaminated by droplets when a person who is infected with the virus, with or without symptoms, coughs, sneezes, or even talks. Droplets do not travel very far and with distancing, you will not breathe them in. It can also be spread between people through droplets in the air that are created when an infected person coughs or sneezes but you will be safer if you stay 6 feet away from another person.

Signs & Symptoms

It can take up to 14 days after being exposed to COVID-19 to develop signs and symptoms.

Pregnant women probably do not have more severe illness than non-pregnant women (see page 2 for effects in pregnancy).

More common: fever $>38^{\circ}\text{C}$, cough with or without sputum, difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle aches, and joint pain

Less common: headache, sore throat, runny nose, nausea, and diarrhea

Severe symptoms: difficulty breathing, chest pain, confusion

Self monitor for symptoms and changes in body temperature daily. If symptoms develop, self-isolate. COVID-19 is tested using a nasopharyngeal swab, which is a swab of throat and nose. This is done at a testing centre. It is important to be familiar with testing criteria in your city.

Prevention of Infection

1. Proper handwashing for at least 20 seconds with soap and water. If not available, use hand sanitizer with 60% or more alcohol. Wash hands immediately after touching surfaces, coughing, sneezing, touching used tissues, masks, etc.
2. Avoid touching your face, mouth, nose, or eyes before washing your hands.
3. Cough and sneeze in a tissue and dispose of tissue immediately. If tissue is not available, cough and sneeze on the inside of your elbow.
4. Wear a mask if you have any symptoms or are caring for someone with known or suspected COVID-19.
5. Practice physical distancing by staying at home as much as possible. If in public, maintain at least 6 feet between yourself and others. Avoid shaking hands, hugging, and kissing.
6. Clean and disinfect objects and surfaces that are frequently touched.
7. Avoid sharing household items (eg. cups, eating utensils, etc.) unless they have been washed with soap and water.
8. Avoid visiting long term care facilities and hospitals.
9. Avoid leaving your home for non-essential services. Minimize in person meetings and group activities involving <10 people.



**Stay Home &
Wash Your
Hands!**



Resources:

Government of Canada:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19.html>

Society of Obstetricians & Gynecologists of Canada:

<https://sogc.org/en/-/COVID-19/en/content/COVID-19/COVID-19.aspx?hkey=4e808c0d-555f-4714-8a4a-348b547dc268>

World Health Organization (WHO):

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

OBGYN Academy:

<https://obgynacademy.com/covid-19/>



How is COVID-19 Treated?

Most people have a mild self-limiting infection that resolves with symptomatic management at home. It is important to drink plenty of fluids and use acetaminophen (Tylenol) for fever or pain.

If you develop severe symptoms (ex. chest pain, shortness of breath, confusion) or problems with your pregnancy, it is important to seek medical care. People who develop severe symptoms or issues related to pregnancy may be hospitalized. While in hospital, both mother and baby are monitored for any complications. Severe breathing difficulties, which are rare, may need oxygen and assisted ventilation in the intensive care unit (ICU). Other severe complications that would need admission to ICU include septic shock, kidney failure, and multi-organ failure.

There is currently no specific antiviral medication or vaccination for the COVID-19 virus. Do not use unproven remedies such as chloroquine unless in an approved clinical trial.

Current therapies are being developed and investigated in Canada and worldwide.

How Does COVID-19 Affect My Pregnancy?

This is a new virus so there is very little evidence about COVID-19 in pregnancy. Pregnancy outcomes have generally been good. At this time, there is no evidence of virus being transmitted from mother to baby during pregnancy and no evidence that the virus causes birth defects. Most infants born to pregnant women with COVID-19 are healthy.

For women who develop COVID-19 in pregnancy, it is important to self-isolate and be treated by a multidisciplinary team. Prenatal care is done by an obstetrician and timing of delivery is individualized on a case-by-case basis. Diagnosis of COVID-19 itself is not an indication for delivery, but women with severe illness may need to be delivered preterm. A pregnant woman who becomes infected with COVID-19 may be at increased risk of Cesarean section. It is important to monitor baby's heart rate during delivery and for delivery to occur at a hospital.

Your healthcare provider will guide and support you during this difficult time.

Having a baby is important; you may be accompanied by 1 person of your choice during labour and delivery.

Delivery in women affected with COVID-19

Epidural may be used to assist with pain. Cesarean section is done for routine obstetrical indications. Delayed cord clamping and skin-to-skin contact can be done. The newborn is tested for COVID-19 at birth.

There is no evidence of transmission of virus in breastmilk. Women may choose to breastfeed or feed with expressed breast milk. It is important to wash hands before touching baby or touching bottle and to wear a mask. Postpartum visit may be done virtually.

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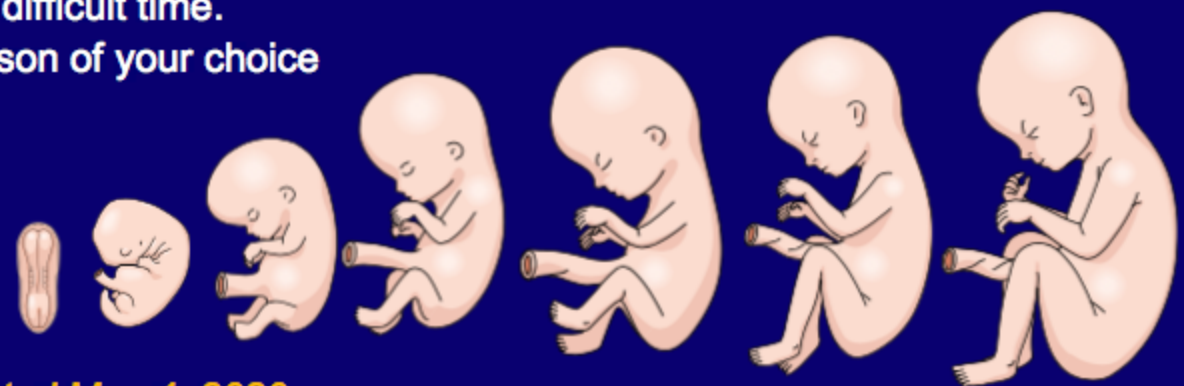
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