Pregnancy, New Parents and COVID-19

This guidance document will continue to be updated as the COVID-19 situation evolves. Visit www.coronavirusnetwork.org for the latest information, updates and resources.

I am pregnant...

Am I at greater risk of COVID-19?
While there is still information being researched, currently there is some evidence that the coronavirus makes pregnant people more sick compared to other people and more likely to be hospitalized and receive ventilation than non-pregnant women. People who are pregnant are generally at greater risk of getting more sick from other viruses that are similar to the coronavirus, such as the virus that causes the flu. For this reason, if you are pregnant you should do everything that you can to reduce your risk of getting sick, both from the coronavirus and other more common viruses.

If I get COVID-19 while I am pregnant, is my baby at risk in any way?
Though there is a lot we are still learning, there is no evidence that the coronavirus puts pregnant people at greater risk of severe illness compared to other adults. As a result, if you have COVID-19 and are pregnant, you are not more likely to get sick to the point that it would endanger you, your pregnancy or your unborn baby. In addition, based on what we know about the coronavirus, transmission to your unborn child is unlikely. Finally, there have been some reports that people who were diagnosed with COVID-19 late in their pregnancies have given birth preterm. Despite these reports, however, there is no absolute evidence that having COVID-19 increases the likelihood of having a preterm birth.

How can I reduce my risk of getting COVID-19 and protect others in my home?
There are many things people can do to protect yourself and others from the coronavirus:

- Wash your hands with soap and water frequently for at least 20 seconds. You should especially wash them…
  - After touching surfaces in public or items from outside brought into your home
  - After touching other people, including children
  - After sneezing or coughing into your hand or a tissue
  - Before eating and preparing food
- Avoid touching your mouth, nose, and eyes (especially with unwashed hands)
- If soap and water is not around, use alcohol-based sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol
- Stay at least 6 feet away from other people when out in public.
- Avoid contact with people who feel sick, including family members
- If you begin to feel sick, avoid all contact with others, including family members
- Where a cloth face mask that covers your nose and mouth (especially when in public and when maintaining 6 feet distance from others is not possible).
- Disinfect “high-touch” surfaces, such as doorknobs, keys, light switches, phones, etc., with alcohol-based disinfectant that is at least 60% alcohol

**Should I be worried about going to the doctor’s office, clinic, or other medical care setting to receive prenatal care and get routine vaccinations?**

Even with the serious risks that COVID-19 pose to your health, it is still important that you make all scheduled appointments to receive prenatal care and that you get routine vaccinations. Doing so is really important to the health of you and your unborn baby. While the coronavirus does not seem to put pregnant people at increased risk of serious illness that would endanger pregnancy, other viruses — like the virus that causes the flu, do put pregnant people at such increased risk. As a result, getting a flu vaccine, Tdap vaccine as well as other vaccines, is essential to protecting the health of your unborn baby.

If you are worried about going to receive care, please know that there are thousands of people who attend appointments and who have babies without interference or harm caused by the coronavirus. Also, you can call ahead to ask your doctor or health care provider what they are doing to separate sick people from healthy people at their facilities. Most providers are taking the necessary precautions to isolate people who are sick and may have COVID-19 as well as disinfect medical facilities. In addition, some in-person visits can be taken care of virtually using telehealth options. Ask your doctor or provider about the possibility of having telehealth visits.

**Should I be worried about having my baby at the hospital where there might be many COVID-19 cases?**

You should not be worried about giving birth at the hospital, if that is where you want to give birth. It is always safest to give birth under the supervision of trained health care professionals, whether in the hospital or elsewhere. Though there might be people with COVID-19 being treated at the hospital where you plan to give birth, there are numerous strategies hospital management and staff are implementing to significantly reduce the risk of having the coronavirus spread within the hospital. If you are worried, or uncertain where the safest place is for giving birth, call your doctor or health care provider.

**I am a new parent.**

**Is my newborn baby at greater risk of COVID-19?**

There have been a small number of individual cases reported that may indicate that newborn babies, or infants, are at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19 when
compared to children of all ages. However, this is not confirmed as there is a lot we are still in the process of learning. It should also be reassuring to know that there have been relatively far fewer serious cases among children compared to adults. As a result, any increased risk that infants may have for getting severely sick compared to children, still amounts to a very small risk.

In terms of when infants are at risk of getting the coronavirus, a number of newborn babies have tested positive for COVID-19 shortly after birth, but at this time it is unclear if they were infected before, during, or after birth.

**How can I protect my newborn baby from the coronavirus?**

There are many ways you can protect your newborn baby from the coronavirus. First, you should do everything you can to protect yourself and others who live in your home, since you and the people in your home are the ones who are most likely to spread the coronavirus to the newborn. Everyone should make they:

- Wash their hands with soap and water frequently (especially after being in public and before holding the baby).
- Avoid touching their mouth, nose, and eyes (especially with unwashed hands).
- If soap and water is not around, use alcohol-based sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol.
- Stay at least 6 feet away from other people when out in public.
- Avoid contact with people who feel sick, including family members.
- Avoid all contact with others, including family members, if feeling sick.
- Wear a cloth face mask that covers the nose and mouth (especially when in public and when maintaining 6 feet distance from others is not possible).
- Disinfect “high-touch” surfaces, such as doorknobs, keys, light switches, phones, etc., with alcohol-based disinfectant that is at least 60% alcohol.

You should also avoid having people who do not live with you come into contact with the newborn baby. Although you may be excited to introduce the baby to friends and family, it is best to practice social distancing and keep the newborn away from others that do not live in your home with you. *Newborn babies should also NOT wear any sort of mask or face covering since it may prevent them from breathing.* It is advised that children aged 0-2 years old do not wear a face mask or covering.

**Should I be worried about going to the doctor's office, clinic, or other medical care setting to receive post-partum care or check-ups for my newborn?**

You should make sure that you attend all scheduled appointments to receive the post-partum care you need to be healthy. Similarly, you should bring your baby to all scheduled check-ups and well visits in order to best protect the baby’s health. Although you may have opportunities to receive some postpartum care remotely using telehealth options, newborn check-ups and well visits should be done in-person. In-person visits
best allows health care professionals to assess the health of your newborn and to conduct important screening tests.

**Should I stop breastfeeding if I have COVID-19?**
People with COVID-19 can continue breastfeeding their child, though they should take extra precautions. We still do not know for sure if people with COVID-19 can pass on the coronavirus to their babies by breastfeeding them, but based on available information it seems UNLIKELY that this is possible. That being said, the decision to start, stop, or continue breastfeeding should be made by you and your doctor or health care provider. If you decide to breastfeed, you should thoroughly wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before breastfeeding. You should also wear a cloth face mask or covering while breastfeeding.

**If I have COVID-19, how can I safely express breastmilk?**
You should wash your hands before expressing breastmilk and before you touch any part of the breast pump or bottle. While expressing milk, you should wear a cloth face mask or covering. After you are finished, you should clean all parts of the breast pump that come into contact with the breastmilk. If possible, the baby should be fed by someone who does not have COVID-19 and lives in your home. This person should also not be someone who is at high risk for severe illness, meaning they should not be over the age of 65 and should not be living with a chronic health condition.

**I am a parent with children older than one year old.**

**Are my children at greater risk of COVID-19?**
Compared to adults, children are at far lower risk of getting seriously ill from COVID-19. The majority of children with COVID-19 have mild cases with many experiencing cold-like symptoms, like fever, runny nose, and cough. However, children with certain health problems, such as chronic lung disease, moderate to severe asthma, or serious heart conditions, might be at increased risk of having a severe case of COVID-19. In addition, children with weakened immune systems might be at increased risk.

**Can my children have play dates with their friends?**
An essential part of slowing the spread of the coronavirus and protecting those who are the most vulnerable among us is social distancing. Since children can get the coronavirus and spread it, in-person playdates with friends should be avoided. When children play with others, especially in groups, they put themselves and others at risk. Some parents may decide that having their children play with others outweighs the risk of the coronavirus. If they allow in-person playdates, their children should only be around a small number of other children. Their children should also not play with children who have members within their house who are at high risk of getting seriously sick from COVID-19. Overall, parents should be smart about weighing the risks to not only their children, but others as well. Instead of having in-person playdates, parents should
consider scheduling video chats for children and their friends. In addition, when playing outside children should stay at least 6 feet away from other people and children who are not members of their household.

**Is it okay to have grandparents around my children?**
If your children’s grandparents are over 65 years old and/or have a chronic health condition, such as chronic lung disease, that puts them at increased risk of getting a severe case of COVID-19, your children should avoid direct contact with their grandparents. Children can get and spread coronavirus. Although they are not at particular risk for serious illness from COVID-19, their grandparents might be. Children can be brought around their grandparents, but they should wear a face mask (if they are 2 years or older) and stay at least 6 feet away from them. This way, grandparents and their grandchildren can interact without putting each other at risk.

**What is Multi-System Inflammatory Syndrome that has been linked to COVID-19?**
Multi-System Inflammatory syndrome (MIS-C) is the name of the condition that medical professionals have observed in some children and adolescents with COVID-19 that results in the inflammation, or swelling, of various organs and systems within the body, including the heart, lungs, brain, kidneys, skin, and eyes. Symptoms or signs of MIS-C include fever, abdominal pains, vomiting, diarrhea, and fatigue. There is still a lot we do not know about MIS-C. Scientists are busy investigating cases and hope to bring to light additional information in the near future. In the meantime, if your child experiences any of these symptoms, or any other symptoms that worry you, call your health care provider or pediatrician.

**How can I protect my children from COVID-19?**
You should have your children follow the guidelines that everyone should stick to in order to reduce the risk of getting and spreading the coronavirus. This includes:

- Avoiding close contact with people who are sick or not feeling well
- Maintaining 6 feet away from people, children and pets that are not part of the household
- Frequently washing hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (especially after being in public and before eating)
- Not touching the nose, mouth or eyes with unwashed hands
- Wearing a face mask that covers the nose and mouth when in public if older than 2 years
- Staying home when sick or not feeling well
- Covering sneezes and coughs with a tissue and throwing the tissue in the trash

In addition, at home you should disinfect ‘high touch’ surfaces, such as doorknobs, countertops, and lightswitches. Finally, you should launder items, such as plush toys, blankets, etc., when possible.
Information for this FAQ came from:

Mayo Clinic Health System:
New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene:
https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/covid/covid-19-main.page
New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene:
U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):
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Please note that the guidance in this document does not substitute for the recommendations of your healthcare provider.