

# CORONAVIRUS DISEASE (COVID-19) PREGNANCY, CHILDBIRTH AND CARING FOR NEWBORNS: ADVICE FOR MOTHERS



## Pregnancy

COVID-19 is a new disease and we are still learning how it affects pregnant women. There is currently no evidence that suggests pregnant women are at a higher risk of becoming seriously ill from COVID-19. There is currently no evidence that a developing child could be negatively affected by COVID-19.

Throughout pregnancy, women experience changes in their bodies that may increase the risk of other illnesses, such as viral **respiratory infections**. This is why it is important for pregnant women, especially those at high risk of developing severe complications, should take the following precautions to protect against the possibility of becoming ill:

- ▶ **Stay home** as much as possible, except for important medical appointments.
- ▶ **Talk to your doctor, obstetrician or midwife** about the possibility of telephone or videoconference appointments.
- ▶ **Avoid unnecessary** visitors to your home.
- ▶ **Wash your hands** often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or, if not available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- ▶ **Practice physical distancing**. Keep a distance of at least two metres from others.
- ▶ **Avoid touching** your mouth, nose, and eyes.
- ▶ **Avoid crowded places and peak-hours**. Make limited trips to the store for essentials
- ▶ **Avoid travel by public transit**.

If you have travelled outside of Canada, had close contact with someone who has or is suspected to have COVID-19 in the last 14 days, you need to **quarantine (self-isolate)**.

If you have been diagnosed with COVID-19, or are waiting to hear the results of a lab test for COVID-19, you must **isolate at home**.

## Childbirth

There is currently **no evidence of mother-to-child transmission** through childbirth when the mother gets COVID-19 in the third trimester.

- ▶ If you plan to give birth in a hospital or birth centre, learn about the policies in place.
  - Most hospitals and birth centres have reduced visitors or a no-visitor policy.
  - In most cases, only one support person may be permitted.
  - Your support person is not considered a visitor.
- ▶ If you plan to give birth at home, talk to your midwife about:
  - whether homebirths are still an option in your province or territory during the pandemic; and,
  - precautions to take to ensure your home environment is safe.
- ▶ If you have COVID-19, talk to your health care provider about the preferred birth plan. The birth plan should be individualized and based on your preferences, the safety of the care provider, as well as obstetric recommendations.
- ▶ Your health care provider will consult perinatal (immediately before birth), neonatal (after birth), infectious disease and intensive care specialists, as required.

## Baby care

If you have or may have COVID-19, you must **isolate yourself** in your home as much as possible; this includes practicing **physical distancing** in your home, with the only exception being the baby. You can stay together in the same room as your baby if preferred, especially during the establishment of breastfeeding and bonding. However, you should take all possible precautions to avoid spreading the virus to your baby, which includes:

- ▶ **Wash your hands** often, especially before and after touching your baby or your other children.
- ▶ Wear a medical mask, or if not available a **non-medical mask or face covering** (i.e. **constructed** to completely cover the nose and mouth without gaping, and secured to the head by ties or ear loops) if close contact with others (including the baby) cannot be avoided, to help protect those around you.
- ▶ Ensure the environment around you is clean and disinfected with **approved hard-surface disinfectants**.



Breastfeeding lowers your baby's risk of infection and illness throughout infancy and childhood. The virus that causes COVID-19 **has not been found** in breast milk.

- ▶ Considering the benefits of breastfeeding and the insignificant role of breast milk in transmission of other respiratory viruses, breastfeeding can continue.
- ▶ However, if the mother has/may have COVID-19, during breastfeeding she should always wear a medical mask, or if not available, a **non-medical mask or face covering**, and consider covering the baby with a blanket or towel.
- ▶ The mother should adhere to proper respiratory and hand **hygiene** before and after close contact with the baby.

If you are too ill to breastfeed or provide routine baby care, you are encouraged to:

- ▶ Ask a healthy adult to feed and care for the baby. Some people may transmit COVID-19 even though they do not show any **symptoms**.
- ▶ Wear a non-medical **face mask** or facial covering when caring for a baby in a house where someone has or may have COVID-19, in order to help protect the baby and others around you.
- ▶ Feed the child with formula or expressed milk.
- ▶ Sterilize equipment carefully before each use, if using a breast pump
- ▶ Do not share bottles or breast pump.
- ▶ Ask any other healthy household members to wear a non-medical face mask when physical distancing of 2 metres cannot be ensured.

## Visitors

Visitors should be restricted or avoided during the period of physical distancing. You do not want anyone to inadvertently expose yourself or anyone in your household to the virus. It is especially important not to have visitors if you or your child have or may have COVID-19.

## Mental Health

Parents and caregivers who may need to be separated from their children, and children who may need to be separated from their primary caregivers as a result of illness from COVID-19, should consult appropriately trained health or non-health workers for mental health and psychosocial support. Contact your local **Public Health Authority** for assistance.

**If you have concerns about COVID-19, talk to your doctor, obstetrician or midwife.**

**FOR RESOURCES ON COVID-19 AND PREGNANCY, VISIT:**

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[www.sogc.org](http://www.sogc.org)

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ON CORONAVIRUS:**

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1-833-784-4397      [Canada.ca/coronavirus](http://Canada.ca/coronavirus)

