



## **Pregnancy and COVID-19 Resources for Pregnant People and their Families**

*March 21, 2020*

### **Background**

The New York State Department of Health (Department) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) continue to closely monitor the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. In response to the outbreak, Governor Andrew M. Cuomo's Executive Order 202 declared a state of emergency on March 7, 2020.

Pregnancy is an exciting and sometimes stressful experience. Being pregnant during a disease outbreak may add extra anxiety and concern for you and those you care about who are pregnant. Health care providers and people who research infections are still learning about the virus that causes COVID-19, including how easily it spreads and affects different at-risk populations.

Currently, the virus is thought to be spread from an infected person to others by respiratory droplets when a person coughs or sneezes and is in close contact with another person. According to the CDC, we do not yet know if pregnant people are more susceptible to COVID-19 than the general public. Due to changes that occur during pregnancy, pregnant people may be more susceptible to viral respiratory infections. The most important thing you can do is to protect yourself from getting sick. This includes following the same guidance that is provided to everyone, including people who are not pregnant:

### **General Infection Prevention Strategies**

All people should use prevention strategies to reduce their chances of getting any virus (like influenza or "flu" or "the common cold").

- Stay home if you are sick. Call your health care provider for advice that can be provided over the phone or using telehealth, before seeking care in the office.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing and then discard it in a closed container, or if a tissue is not available, use the inside of your elbow.
- Keep your hands clean by washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are unavailable, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with others, especially those who are sick.
- Get the flu shot (at this time, there is no current vaccination for coronaviruses).
- Call your health care provider with any questions about how you feel.

For more information about how to protect yourself and your family from COVID-19, visit the New York State Department of Health Coronavirus website at [www.health.ny.gov/coronavirus](http://www.health.ny.gov/coronavirus).

It is important for pregnant people and people who care for them to protect themselves from illness. These Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) will explain what we currently know about COVID-19 and its impact on pregnancy, and give you information on how to stay healthy.



## **Frequently Asked Questions about COVID-19 and Pregnancy**

### **General Questions:**

#### ***If I'm pregnant, am I more likely to get COVID-19?***

Right now we do not know if pregnancy makes people more likely to get sick from COVID-19. We do know that pregnancy can cause changes to the body that may increase the risk of getting some infections.

#### ***If I get COVID-19, how sick will I get?***

We do not know if this infection is more serious for a pregnant person. With other similar infections like the cold or flu, some pregnant people may be more likely to have a severe illness.

#### ***Can COVID-19 cause problems for my pregnancy?***

We do not know at this time if COVID-19 causes problems during pregnancy, or if it affects the baby's health after birth.

#### ***Who can I talk to about COVID-19 and my pregnancy?***

We recommend that you call your health care provider and ask about how COVID-19 might affect you and your baby. There is a lot of incorrect and outdated information online and on social media.

### **During Pregnancy or Delivery**

#### ***If I have COVID-19, can I pass it to my baby?***

We still do not know if exposure to COVID-19 during pregnancy or during delivery will impact your baby.

#### ***Can COVID-19 affect my pregnancy?***

We still do not know how the virus affects pregnancies. There have been a small number of reported problems with pregnancy or delivery, like premature delivery (before 37 weeks gestation). However, it is not clear that these problems were because of the infection, or other reasons.

#### ***Is it safe to go to the hospital for an appointment or to deliver my baby?***

If you have an appointment at a hospital, call ahead to find out if there are any changes. Some health care providers may do prenatal visits at a different location.

Hospitals are safe for delivering your baby. In New York State, hospitals must designate separate space for labor and delivery, to keep patients healthy and safe. If you can, call your health care provider before going to the hospital. They will tell you if there are changes to admitting procedures due to COVID-19.



***I heard hospitals will not allow visitors into the hospital. Does this mean I cannot have someone with me when I deliver?***

In order to limit the spread of infections, hospitals are limiting visitors. For people who come to the hospital to deliver a baby, you may have **one support person** with you. This support person can be your spouse, partner, doula, or any other person of your choosing. This person will be the **only support person** allowed to be present **during your hospital care**. Because this virus affects older people more than younger people, you should avoid choosing a support person who is 60 or older if possible. Your support person cannot have any symptoms of being sick or have been recently sick. They will be screened for symptoms of COVID-19 including a temperature check before and during their stay with you.

**Infants**

***If I have COVID-19 during pregnancy, will it hurt my baby?***

We do not know if the virus affects newborns if they were exposed during pregnancy. A small number of newborns have been diagnosed with COVID-19 within days of delivery, but we do not know if they were infected during pregnancy, delivery, or after birth.

***Can my baby stay with me after I deliver?***

Most babies will continue to stay with their parent after delivery. If you have COVID-19 or your healthcare provider thinks you might be infected, the hospital may decide it is best to separate the parent and infant. This decision will be made between you and your healthcare provider.

**Breastfeeding**

***I'm worried about COVID-19 and breastfeeding. Who can I talk to?***

Call your health care provider to talk about breastfeeding. If you are in the hospital, you can also ask to talk to a lactation consultant.

***Can COVID-19 be passed to my baby from breast milk?***

We do not know if COVID-19 can be passed into breastmilk, but there is no specific guidance against breastfeeding during infection with similar viruses that cause colds or the flu.

***If I have COVID-19, or might have been exposed to COVID-19, should I breastfeed?***

Breast milk is the best source of nutrition for most infants. However, we still do not know much about COVID-19. Starting or continuing to breastfeed while infected with COVID-19 is a decision that people should make along with their family and their healthcare provider.

Someone with a confirmed COVID-19 infection, or someone who has symptoms of infection should [take all possible precautions](#) to avoid spreading the virus to their infant. This could include:

- washing hands thoroughly before touching the infant; and
- wearing a face mask, if possible, while breast feeding.



## Department of Health

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People who are expressing breast milk with a breast pump should:

- use a breast pump that only you use (a 'dedicated' breast pump),
- wash your hands before touching any pump or bottle parts,
- follow [recommendations](#) for proper pump cleaning after each use, and
- if possible, consider having someone who does not have COVID-19 feed the expressed breast milk to the infant.

***Additional breastfeeding resources:***

Breastfeeding and the flu: <https://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/breastfeeding-special-circumstances/maternal-or-infant-illnesses/influenza.html>

Precautions to avoid spreading COVID-19: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-prevent-spread.html>

Breast pump cleaning recommendations:

<https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/hygiene/healthychildcare/infantfeeding/breastpump.html>

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**Additional Resources on COVID-19 and Pregnancy**

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/pregnancy-breastfeeding.html>

<https://www.marchofdimes.org/complications/coronavirus-disease-covid-19-what-you-need-to-know.aspx>

**New York State Resources for Pregnant and Parenting Families**

If you are pregnant or a new parent and need other supports, please visit the following sites to learn about our free perinatal home visiting programs, available in some areas of the state:

Maternal and Infant Community Health Collaborative:

[https://www.health.ny.gov/community/adults/women/docs/michc\\_by\\_county.pdf](https://www.health.ny.gov/community/adults/women/docs/michc_by_county.pdf)

Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program:

[https://www.health.ny.gov/community/pregnancy/home\\_visiting\\_programs/pregnant\\_parenting\\_fam.htm#list](https://www.health.ny.gov/community/pregnancy/home_visiting_programs/pregnant_parenting_fam.htm#list)

Family Planning Program

[https://www.health.ny.gov/community/pregnancy/family\\_planning/program\\_sites.htm](https://www.health.ny.gov/community/pregnancy/family_planning/program_sites.htm)