

Discharge information for new parent recovering from COVID-19

You have been diagnosed with a viral syndrome called COVID-19 or novel Coronavirus. This is a respiratory illness that causes fever, cough, chills, muscle aches, sneezing, sore throat, vomiting, or diarrhea. During pregnancy and the postpartum period the immune system is suppressed to help the developing pregnancy. This may make pregnant persons more susceptible to the more severe symptoms of COVID-19. Complete resolution of symptoms can take more than two weeks after they begin. Please hydrate (water, diluted juices, Pedialyte, Gatorade, etc.), rest and eat healthy during this time.

When to call us: If you are getting worse, it is very important that you contact your OBGYN office immediately. Emergency warning signs for COVID-19 include: difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, new confusion or difficulty arousing, and bluish lips or face. If you have a medical emergency and call 911, advise them you have COVID-19. For non-emergencies **before** seeking care, call your healthcare provider and tell them that you have, or are being evaluated for COVID-19. Put on a facemask before you enter the facility. These steps will help the healthcare provider's office to keep other people in the office or waiting room from getting infected or exposed.

When you get home: It is important that you isolate at home during your illness. We recommend that you only leave your home to seek medical care. If possible, you should stay in a specific room and use a separate bathroom from others in the house. We do not recommend bed rest. It is important that you get up and move around as you can to prevent blood clots in your legs. We do not recommend that you go to work, school or public areas. You should avoid public transportation, ride sharing or taxis if possible. We also recommend that if you must be around others that you wear a face mask. Make sure to wash your hands frequently with soap and water or use hand sanitizer. Encourage your family to do the same. Do your best to not share any household items with your family. Other guidance for how to help at home is here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-prevent-spread.html>

How will this affect your baby? If you have COVID-19 around the time of delivery, it may be possible that your baby would also be infected with the virus. We don't have a lot of information about babies and children who are infected with COVID-19 but so far, infants who are infected around the time of birth have done very well. In fact, infants usually handle this virus much better than adults do. It's very common for new parents to have a lot of questions about how this virus will impact the care of their new baby. We've put together these recommendations for you based on information from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the experience of doctors who take care of newborns in areas of the world where COVID-19 has already been circulating.

COVID-19 virus spread: People get COVID-19 by being in very close contact with an infected person. Examples include being sneezed or coughed on by someone who is sick with COVID-19, living in the same house as someone with COVID-19, or spending a long time within 6 feet of an infected person. Some infants get COVID-19 from their mothers during delivery but many do not. As far as we know, COVID-19 is not in breastmilk. However – the close contact between mother and baby during cuddling, breastfeeding, changing diapers, etc. does put the baby at high risk of infection. This risk is why we recommend that you try to be separated from your baby while you are ill, even though we understand that is a difficult request.

Caring for your baby at home: If a mother has COVID-19 and is still sick with it when she and her baby are ready to go home, some special care planning is needed. It is always important that anyone who cares for a newborn baby wash their hands when they enter the house and again before touching the infant. If someone who is not absolutely necessary for the care of the mother or baby is sick, they should not visit the house. Whenever possible, a healthy person should provide all the direct care for the infant at home. The baby and the mother should do their best to stay at least 6 feet apart. When it is not possible for a mother to stay separated from the baby, she should very carefully wash her hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and if possible, put on a facemask before caring for the baby. When the mother is feeling better and no longer has fever, she should discuss with her pediatrician and/or OB care provider about when it is safe to stop the separation of mother and baby.

Breastfeeding / Formula feeding: We support all forms of infant nutrition. If you are able to breastfeed, this is felt to be the best nutrition for a newborn. We do not currently think that the virus can be transmitted through breastmilk, but we are concerned that the infected mother could transmit the virus to the baby when they are in close contact during nursing. Therefore, we strongly suggest that mothers use a breast pump to express milk and have a healthy caregiver feed the milk to the infant. The person who feeds the baby should be wearing clean clothing and wash their hands for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer prior to feeding the infant. Prior to expressing milk with a manual or electric breast pump, the mother should thoroughly wash her hands before pumping and sterilize the pump parts after each pumping based on the manufacturer recommendations.

If you are formula feeding, we recommend that someone else make formula and feed the baby until the period of separation has ended if at all possible. Please encourage all caregivers of the baby to wash hands frequently and seek care immediately if they become ill.

If your baby is infected with the COVID-19 virus: If your baby does become infected with the virus, the baby's symptoms will most likely be extremely mild. If your baby does develop symptoms, you may notice a stuffy nose or sneezing or coughing more often. If the baby develops trouble breathing or a fever higher than 38.0 degrees Celsius or 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit, you should call the baby's doctor right away. Make sure you let the doctor know that the baby's mother has COVID-19.

Your baby's doctor visits: If you need to take your baby to the doctor's office for a check up or for any other concern, it is very important to let the doctor's office know that the mother has COVID-19. If at all possible, a healthy caregiver should take the baby to the doctor and the mother should stay at home. The doctor's office may ask that the adult who is with the baby wear a mask and/or that the baby's car seat / carrier be covered loosely with a clean sheet or blanket. If they request that, it is important that this be done as you enter the doctor's office. Therefore, it's important to coordinate visits to the doctor carefully with the doctor's office personnel.

Additional guidance from the CDC specific to COVID-19 during pregnancy and breastfeeding can be found at https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/pregnancy-breastfeeding.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fspecific-groups%2Fpregnancy-faq.html