

COVID-19 Information for Our Pregnant Patients

As your prenatal care providers, we know the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) outbreak is creating significant anxiety for our pregnant patients. It can be difficult to sort through the information in the media. As always, please call your prenatal care provider or message the portal if you have specific questions related to your pregnancy. The following is some general information and resources and is accurate as of the date shown above. This is a new virus and the information and recommendations are changing rapidly. Please check the links for the most up-to-date information. If you are reading this on paper and you do not have internet access, you can call your prenatal care provider or the Rhode Island Department of Health info line at 401-222-8022.

The best links to check for the most up-to-date information are:

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

<https://health.ri.gov/diseases/ncov2019/>

Q: As a pregnant person, am I in a higher risk group for complications from the Coronavirus?

A: There is limited data regarding how COVID-19 impacts pregnant people compared to the general population. Changes to the immune system during pregnancy make pregnant people more susceptible to complications from other types of viral illnesses. The most current data indicates that while it is always important for pregnant people to avoid illness, pregnant people are at the same risk as non-pregnant people. According to the CDC, transmission of coronavirus to a fetus in utero is unlikely, however one study of COVID-19 positive newborns could not rule this out as a possibility. There is a risk of transmission to the newborn after birth if the mother has COVID-19. The most up-to-date CDC recommendations for pregnant and breastfeeding patients can be found here:

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/pregnancy-breastfeeding.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fprepare%2Fpregnancy-breastfeeding.html

Q: How should I limit my activities to protect myself during pregnancy?

Rhode Island Department of Health currently recommends that everyone stay at home except for essential errands, limit close contact to immediate family, work from home if possible, wear a cloth face covering while in public, and maintain a distance of 6 feet when encountering people in public. This is known as “social distancing” Please check the RIDOH website for updates at

<https://health.ri.gov/diseases/ncov2019/> or call their hotline at 401-222-8022. At the end of this document, you will find a more detailed list on how to protect yourself from infection.

Q: I am a pregnant health care worker or other essential worker and cannot work from home. I am concerned about exposure to the coronavirus at work. What should I do?

A: For concerns about exposure in any type of workplace, please call your prenatal care provider for guidance. If your workplace presents significant risk of exposure, you may need to be medically excused from work temporarily.

Q: I am pregnant and I have a fever, cough, shortness of breath, muscle aches, sore throat, and/or headache. What should I do?

A: Please call your prenatal care provider for guidance before going to an emergency room or outpatient office. We have a dedicated team of providers who answer all COVID-19 related calls, order testing when indicated, and see patients in person when indicated, or advise to go to the ER.

Q: What can I expect when I go to Women & Infants Hospital to have my baby?

1) All patients and support persons will be asked to wear a cloth face covering while at the hospital. If you are unable to bring one from home, a mask will be provided.

2) As of 4/28/2020, all patients being admitted to Women & Infants for labor and birth will be tested for COVID-19, unless they decline the test. Pregnant patients who are positive for COVID-19 may be transferred to the Maternal-Fetal Medicine physicians at Women & Infants for care during labor and birth. This allows patients to be cared for by a specific trained team, preserves personal protective equipment and limits health care provider exposure. Patients who test positive for COVID-19 cannot have any family members or visitors with them during any part of their hospital stay. That policy is currently being reconsidered. In the meantime, we recognize separation from family in the event of a positive test is very difficult. We will do whatever we can to support you.

3) Pregnant patients who test negative for COVID-19 may have one support person during their stay and a pre-designated doula, if applicable, during labor. During the postpartum stay, visitation is limited to one support person who must remain in the room with the patient. Please check for the most up-to-date visitation policy here:
<https://www.carenewengland.org/coronavirus/visitation-restrictions.cfm>

4) Newborns of patients with suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19 are considered “patients under investigation” for the virus. Decisions regarding mother/baby

contact and precautions for breastfeeding are made on a case-by-case basis. These are shared decisions between the mother and the health care providers, CDC guidelines regarding mother/baby contact can be found here:

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/inpatient-obstetric-healthcare-guidance.html#anchor_1582067966715

To decrease your risk of infection with coronavirus, we recommend that you:

1. **Frequently** wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, rubbing all surfaces. If soap and water are not available, use a **hand sanitizer** that contains at least 60% alcohol.
2. **Avoid touching your face/eyes/mouth/nose**
3. **Stay home** as much as possible. Work from home if you can. Contact your prenatal care provider if you have concerns about workplace exposure. **Follow current Rhode Island Department of Health guidelines regarding stay-at-home orders and social distancing. You can find the most up-to-date alerts and guidelines here:**
<https://health.ri.gov/covid/#alerts>
4. **Avoid touching high-touch surfaces in public places** – elevator buttons, door handles, handrails, handshaking with people, etc. Use a tissue or your sleeve to cover your hand or finger if you must touch something.
5. **Wash your hands** after touching surfaces in public places.
6. **Avoid crowds**, especially in poorly ventilated spaces. Your risk of exposure to respiratory viruses like COVID-19 may increase in crowded, closed-in settings with little air circulation if there are people in the crowd who are sick.
7. **Keep 6 feet of distance between you and other people when out in public AND wear a cloth face covering.**
8. **Avoid all non-essential travel** including by car, other ground transportation, or airplane.
9. **Pay attention for potential COVID-19 symptoms including fever, cough, shortness of breath, or lost sense of taste or smell. If you feel that you are developing symptoms, call our office at 401-606-3000.**

For general information, please check the links above, which will be frequently updated, or call the Rhode Island Department of Health info line at 401-222-8022. For specific questions regarding your pregnancy, please call your prenatal care provider or message the portal. We are here to help during this stressful time.