

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: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has placed pregnant women in the higher-risk category along with adults 65 and older and people with certain underlying health conditions. There is limited data to tell us 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, and although it is unknown, there is concern that this may also be the case with COVID-19. You can find the most up-to-date CDC recommendations for people in higher-risk groups here:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/high-risk-complications.html>

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

A Rhode Island Department of Health and public health experts currently recommend that everyone stay at home except for essential errands, limit close contact to immediate family, work from home if possible, and maintain a distance of 6 feet when encountering people in public. This is known as “social distancing” or “physical distancing” and is recommended both to protect individuals and slow the rate of spread in the community. Social distancing recommendations may change rapidly. Please check the RIDOH website for updates

<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 pregnant and I have a trip planned. Can I still travel?

A: The most up-to-date general recommendations on travel can be found here:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>

At this time, we recommend our pregnant patients avoid all nonessential travel, both domestic and international, including via ground transportation.

Q: I am a pregnant health care worker and I came in contact with a patient who has COVID-19. What should I do?

A: For this or any suspected exposure to a person with COVID-19, or for concerns about exposure in any type of workplace, please call your prenatal care provider for guidance.

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

A: Influenza and other respiratory viruses can have symptoms similar to COVID-19. Please call your prenatal care provider to report your symptoms so we can determine if you need COVID-19 testing or treatment for influenza.

Q: What can I expect when I go to the hospital to have my baby?

- A. 1) All of our pregnant patients are registered to give birth at Women and Infants' Hospital. Hospital guidelines may change based on new available information. At this time, temporary visitor restrictions are in place to help slow the spread of COVID-19. Currently, pregnant patients may have one support person during their stay and a pre-designated doula, if applicable, during labor. Please check for the most up-to-date visitation policy here:
<https://www.carenewengland.org/coronavirus/visitation-restrictions.cfm>
- 2) Pregnant patients with suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19 will 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. It also preserves personal protective equipment which is in short supply, and limits health care provider exposure so providers can remain at work caring for patients.
- 3) Newborns of patients with suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19 are considered "patients under investigation" and may be temporarily separated from the mother for the recommended isolation. All care providers recognize that newborn separation from parents is a very difficult situation. CDC guidelines inform these policies.

Those guidelines can be found here:

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

Providing breast milk by pumping may be an option for COVID-19 positive parents. Parents in this situation should discuss infant feeding with their provider. For the most up-date information on breastfeeding, please check the CDC website here:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/pregnancy-breastfeeding.html>

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
2. If soap and water are not available, use a **hand sanitizer** that contains at least 60% alcohol.
3. **Avoid touching your face/eyes/mouth/nose**
4. **Stay home** as much as possible. Work from home if you can. Contact your prenatal care provider if you have concerns about workplace exposure.
5. **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.
6. **Wash your hands** after touching surfaces in public places.
7. **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.
8. **Keep 6 feet of distance between you and other people when out in public.**
9. **Avoid all non-essential travel** including by car, other ground transportation, or airplane.
10. **Pay attention for potential COVID-19 symptoms including fever, cough, and shortness of breath. 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.