

COVID-19 AND PREGNANCY

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Physicians, scientists, and even patients are learning more and more about the novel coronavirus or SARS-coV-2 (COVID-19).

Currently, there isn't a lot of information on how the virus affects pregnancy and infants, but we do know that this virus spreads from person to person contact through saliva droplets (coughing, sneezing, talking) and is also potentially airborne.

It enters the body through the respiratory tract (nose and mouth) and infects the lung tissue.

Symptoms include fever, sore throat, loss of taste or smell, difficulty breathing, and diarrhea. In serious cases, the infection can lead to respiratory distress and even death. To be clear, coronavirus is not like the flu virus which has both a vaccine and treatment available. It has shown to be deadlier.

Based on the information we currently have, pregnant women appear to have the same risks

of infection as non-pregnant women. However, pregnant women generally have higher risks of severe illness (meaning the need for hospitalization and intubation) when infected with viruses from the same family of COVID-19, and other viral respiratory infections, including the flu virus. This is due to the physical changes that occur in the bodies of pregnant women.

Also, for women who are pregnant and test positive for COVID-19, there is no evidence that they can pass the virus to their child before birth. The risk of transmission is likely AFTER birth, through droplets. It also has not yet been detected in breast milk. Therefore, obstetricians continue to recommend breastfeeding with extra precaution (cleaning the nipple and wearing an effective mask).

The alternative is to pump the breast milk so that another family member can feed the baby.

Pregnant women should avoid going to public areas or wear a mask in public, wash their hands with soap and water for twenty seconds, or use hand sanitizer. They should also avoid visitors, unnecessary travel, and contact with sick individuals. Also, talk to your doctor if you are eligible for a "telehealth" visit.

Hospitals are currently limiting the amount of visitors a woman can have while in labor. Although there are concerns with going to hospitals, women are strongly encouraged not to labor at home, since even the lowest-risk pregnancies can have major complications. If you are pregnant and experiencing any of the symptoms listed above, seek care immediately. Continue to talk to your OB provider on the latest updates on COVID-19 and pregnancy.