

## COVID-19 Prenatal FAQs

The following information may help address questions expecting parents may have related to the COVID-19 pandemic and is based on information provided by the World Health Organization<sup>1</sup>, Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)<sup>2</sup>, March of Dimes<sup>3</sup>, and Society for Maternal-Fetal-Medicine<sup>4</sup> recommendations.



### What is COVID-19?

COVID-19, a type of coronavirus, is respiratory illness that can affect the lungs and breathing. Individuals with COVID-19 can have a wide range of symptoms (cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fever, chills, headache, sore throat, loss of taste or smell, etc.) ranging from mild to severe. Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus.

### Are pregnant women at risk for contracting COVID-19?

While pregnant women can be at increased risk of some infections such as influenza, it is not known whether they have a greater chance of getting sick from COVID-19, or how serious the illness could be as a result. It is important for pregnant women to protect themselves from illnesses during pregnancy.

### How can pregnant women protect themselves from COVID-19?

Pregnant women can help protect themselves from COVID-19 by doing the following:

#### Avoid germs

- Avoid crowded places, social gatherings and people who are sick or who have been exposed to the virus
- Maintain a distance of 6 feet from others when outside your home
- Cover your mouth and nose when in public and when sneezing or coughing

#### Clean surfaces that can spread germs

- Wash your hands often with soap and water, or alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Avoid touching your face
- Disinfect frequently-touched surfaces daily

### Can pregnant mothers with COVID-19 transmit the virus to their baby?

Mother-to-child transmission of COVID-19 during pregnancy is rare,<sup>5</sup> but after birth a newborn is vulnerable to person-to-person spread. A small number of babies have tested positive for the virus shortly after birth, however it is unknown if these babies got the virus before or after birth. The virus has not been detected in amniotic fluid, breast milk, or other maternal samples.<sup>2</sup> Based on limited reports, adverse outcomes like preterm birth have been reported among babies born to moms with COVID-19, but it's not clear if that's related to maternal infection.<sup>3</sup>

## Can COVID-19 be transmitted through breast milk?

Breast milk can provide protection against many illnesses and is the best source of nutrition for most infants. In limited studies, COVID-19 has not been detected in breast milk; however medical professionals do not know for sure whether mothers with COVID-19 can spread the virus via breast milk. You, along with your family and healthcare provider, should decide whether to start or continue breastfeeding if you are believed to have the virus.<sup>2</sup>

## What type of prenatal visits should pregnant women have during COVID-19?

Most healthcare providers are utilizing telemedicine due to COVID-19 to reduce the patient risk through healthcare exposure unless there is an urgent problem. A healthcare provider may ask you to have a virtual visit, which could require internet access, to discuss your prenatal care. Avoiding unnecessary person-to-person contact is an important part of preventing the spread of the virus to you and your family. Check with your healthcare provider on how their practice is working to limit exposure to COVID-19.

## What types of prenatal screening should pregnant women get during COVID-19?

To minimize the chance of exposure to COVID-19, some professional medical societies have recommended limiting ultrasound in the first trimester. The 12-week nuchal translucency (NT) ultrasound may be considered optional if non-invasive prenatal testing (NIPT) is performed.<sup>4,5</sup> NIPT is a blood test that looks at DNA from the pregnancy found in your bloodstream. This screening test helps determine if your baby is at increased risk for the most common chromosomal conditions including trisomy 21 (Down syndrome), trisomy 18, trisomy 13, sex chromosome aneuploidies (SCA) and 22q11.2 microdeletion. NIPT also provides the option of reporting the sex of your baby. You should discuss your prenatal screening options with your healthcare provider or genetic counselor.

For more detailed and up-to-date guidance, please visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/pregnancy-breastfeeding.html>

### References:

1. Q&A: Pregnancy, childbirth and COVID-19. Accessed May 1, 2020. <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/question-and-answers-hub/q-a-detail/q-a-on-covid-19-pregnancy-and-childbirth>
2. CDC COVID-19 Guidance of Pregnancy and Breastfeeding. Accessed May 1, 2020. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/pregnancy-breastfeeding.html>
3. March of Dimes COVID-19: What you need to know about its impact on moms and babies. Accessed May 1, 2020. <https://www.marchofdimes.org/complications/coronavirus-disease-covid-19-what-you-need-to-know.aspx>
4. The Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine COVID-19 Ultrasound Practice Suggestions. Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine 2020.
5. Alzamora et al. Severe COVID-19 during pregnancy and possible vertical transmission. *Am. J. Perinatol.* 2020 Apr.
6. MFM Guidance for COVID-19. *American Journal of Obstetrics & Gynecology MFM*; 2020.

