

COVID-19 and Pregnancy

IMPORTANT: This is general information only. Ask your doctor or midwife about what care is right for you. There is limited information available about COVID-19 and pregnancy and breastfeeding. Infections can be worse during pregnancy because of normal changes to the body's immune system. It is important to protect yourself and your baby by following general precautions. This parent information may change as more information becomes available.

What is COVID-19 and coronavirus?

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) is the disease caused by a new coronavirus named SARS-CoV-2 and is easily passed from person to person. In most people with good health, COVID-19 is mild. Severe illness, such as pneumonia are more common in older people and those who are already unwell.

As this is a new virus, we are still learning how it may affect you and your baby. Our understanding currently is from women who got the virus late in their pregnancy. There is no information yet about women who may have had an infection in early pregnancy.

How will COVID-19 affect you?

It is expected that most pregnant women who get the virus will experience only mild or moderate cold/flu like symptoms.

If you also are a smoker, have a heart or lung condition such as asthma, or other long-term condition, you may become more unwell than a pregnant woman who doesn't. It is important that you tell your maternity health care provider if you have other health conditions.

How will COVID-19 affect your baby?

The risk of infection passing from mother to baby during pregnancy is thought to be low. So far, the virus has not been shown to pass from the mother to her baby before birth (this is called vertical transmission).

Some babies born to women with COVID-19 have been born early (prematurely). In most cases this was because the decision was made for the baby to be born early because the mother was unwell.

Viral infections, such as the flu can cause a high fever. If you have a high fever at any stage of your pregnancy call your healthcare provider or 13HEALTH (13 43 25 84) as soon as possible.

Is it safe to come to hospital?

High quality maternity and newborn services continue to be provided. To reduce the chance of you, your baby and the staff looking after you getting COVID-19, hospitals may change the way care is provided including:

- providing care in the community rather than in hospital
- offering care by video or phone
- limiting the number of support people and visitors coming into the hospital (this will help to reduce the chance of spreading the infection).
- promoting hand hygiene, other infection control procedures and social distancing

Can COVID-19 be prevented or cured?

There is no vaccine to prevent COVID-19 yet (but a lot of people are working on it). There is also no cure or specific treatment for it. The best thing to do is to reduce your chance of getting the infection in the first place.

You can do this by:

- washing your hands regularly and frequently—use soap and water for 20 seconds or alcohol-based hand sanitiser/gel
- using social distancing (stay 1.5 metres away from other people)
- avoiding anyone who has a fever, cough or symptoms of a cold or chest infection
- avoiding touching your eyes, nose and mouth

If you are unwell:

- telephone your healthcare provider as soon as possible
- take paracetamol for fever or pain, as per instructions on the packaging (avoid medications that contain ibuprofen if possible)
- rest and drink plenty of water

What if you or your family has COVID-19?

If you think you or a family member might have COVID-19, take the [corona virus quiz](https://www.qld.gov.au/health/conditions/health-alerts/coronavirus-covid-19) <https://www.qld.gov.au/health/conditions/health-alerts/coronavirus-covid-19> and call your general practitioner (GP) or 13HEALTH (13 43 25 84)

When should you self-quarantine?

Follow current Queensland Health advice about [self-quarantine](#)

Self-quarantine for 14 days if:

- you have returned from interstate or overseas
- you have been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19 or has returned from overseas in the past 14 days

How do you self-quarantine?

If you have been advised to self-quarantine stay indoors and avoid contact with others for 14 days.

This means:

- not to go to school, work or public areas
- not to use public transport
- stay at home and no visitors to your home
- ventilate rooms by opening windows
- if possible, sleep apart
- use own linen
- use own cutlery and utensils
- separate yourself from other members of the household, where possible

Can you come to antenatal appointments if in self-quarantine?

Contact your healthcare provider or hospital to:

- Inform them that you are currently in self-quarantine for possible or confirmed COVID-19
- Request advice on attending routine antenatal appointments

What if you feel unwell or are worried during self-quarantine?

If you begin to feel unwell (have a fever or shortness of breath, cough or a respiratory illness) while in self-quarantine seek immediate medical attention. Call ahead to your general practitioner (GP) or emergency department and tell them about your situation before you arrive.

What if you go into labour during self-quarantine?

If you go into labour, call the hospital, or your healthcare provider. Tell them that you have or might have COVID-19 infection. They will give you advice.

Our hospitals take great care to limit the spread of disease between patients. They are fully equipped to care for pregnant women with COVID-19.

Will having COVID-19 affect your birth plan?

Having COVID-19 will not by itself affect how your baby is born. If you are booked for an induction of labour or caesarean section, and have suspected or confirmed COVID-19, notify your health care provider immediately to discuss a plan.

There is no evidence that women with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 cannot have an epidural or a spinal block. This will be discussed with you.

If you have been confirmed as positive or are suspected of having COVID-19, continuous monitoring of your baby in labour is recommended (but is not compulsory). This is because some babies (whose mothers had COVID-19) showed signs of distress during labour. Monitoring can help detect problems as early as possible. This recommendation is the same as for other infections in pregnancy. Talk to your healthcare provider about any concerns you may have.

The number of support people you can have with you during your labour and birth may be limited. It is suggested that you choose someone who can stay with you for the whole time.

Will having COVID-19 affect contact with your baby?

In most cases keeping a mother and baby together is best. If either of you are very unwell this may not be possible. Your healthcare provider will talk with you about what you want and what your choices are. If you are very unwell, one option may be for your baby to go home with a well adult (e.g. well partner or relative).

If you have or may have COVID-19 it is important to do everything you can to prevent your baby getting the virus, even if you don't have symptoms. This is why it is very important that you:

- wash your hands before and after touching your baby-use soap and water for 20 seconds or alcohol based hand sanitiser/gel
- routinely clean and disinfect surfaces you have touched
- have a healthy adult assist you to care for your baby where possible
- wear a mask while in close contact including while breastfeeding

A small number of babies may develop mild or moderate symptoms in the weeks following birth and some may require additional hospital care. If your baby becomes unwell following birth, contact your GP or hospital. Call ahead and advise them you have/had COVID-19.

Will your baby be tested for COVID-19?

Generally, your baby will not need to be tested.

Support & information

13HEALTH (13 432584) is a phone line that provides health information, referral and services to the public. <https://www.qld.gov.au/health/contacts/advice/13health>

Queensland Health COVID-19 General information about COVID-19 <https://www.qld.gov.au/health/conditions/health-alerts/coronavirus-covid-19>

Partnering with the woman who declines recommended maternity care. Guideline and associated resources for consumers and clinicians <https://www.health.qld.gov.au/consent/html/pwdrmc>

PANDA (Perinatal Anxiety and Depression Australia.) Supports women and their families who are suffering from perinatal anxiety or depression <https://www.panda.org.au/>

Pregnancy, Birth & Baby Helpline 1800 882 436 (free call) offers free, confidential, professional information and counselling for women, their partners and families relating to issues of conception, pregnancy, birthing and postnatal care. www.health.gov.au/pregnancyhelpline

Lifeline 13 11 14 Lifeline offers a telephone crisis support service to anyone. www.lifeline.org.au

Child Health Service Provides newborn drop-in services, early feeding and support, child health clinics. Refer to www.childrens.health.qld.gov.au/community-health/child-health-service for your nearest service

Women's Health Queensland Wide 1800 017 676 (free call) offers health promotion, information and education service for women and health professionals throughout Queensland. www.womhealth.org.au

Australian Breastfeeding Association 1800 686268 (breastfeeding helpline). Community based self-help group offers information, counselling, and support services, on breastfeeding issues www.breastfeeding.asn.au