



Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19): Pregnancy and Childbirth



If you're pregnant or just had a baby, you likely have many questions about how COVID-19 could affect you and your child. Researchers are still learning more about how the virus affects pregnant women and their babies. Below is information to help you work with your healthcare team.

What are my risks of COVID-19 while pregnant?

Researchers don't know if pregnant women are more likely to get COVID-19. But pregnancy can cause changes to your immune system that can cause any viral illness to be more severe. Take extra care not to get sick during this time. This includes:

- Wearing a face mask as advised. Choose a mask with several layers of tightly woven, breathable fabric and a nose wire. Or wear a disposable face mask with a nose wire. The mask should cover both your nose and mouth. Stay informed of COVID-19 safety precautions in your area and follow your healthcare provider's instructions. See the [CDC's guide to masks](#).
- Washing your hands often
- Using hand sanitizer when soap and water aren't available
- Staying at least 6 feet away from anyone not part of your household, if you are not fully vaccinated.
- Staying away from anyone who is sick
- Cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces every day

- Not traveling if it's not urgent. If you must travel, the CDC recommends being fully vaccinated against COVID-19 first. Fully vaccinated means 2 weeks after getting either the 1-dose or the second shot of the 2-dose vaccine.

What about the COVID-19 vaccine?

The FDA has approved several vaccines to prevent COVID-19, including for those who are pregnant or breastfeeding. One vaccine has been approved for people as young as 12.

Expert groups including ACOG and CDC recommend vaccines. Current data show the vaccines are safe and work well to prevent COVID-19 or reduce the risk of getting seriously ill if you do get the virus.

COVID-19 vaccines are recommended for all people 12 years and older, including people who are pregnant, breastfeeding, trying to get pregnant now, or might become pregnant in the future. For current information about the vaccines, visit the [CDC website](#) or the [ACOG website](#).

The vaccines are given as a shot (injection) in the arm muscle. A 1-dose (Johnson & Johnson) or 2-dose vaccine (either Pfizer or Moderna) may be given. If you get the 2-dose vaccine series, the second dose is given several weeks after the first. If you get the 2-dose vaccine, you don't need an extra dose unless you have a very weak immune system from a solid organ transplant or similar conditions. Talk with your healthcare provider about your specific situation and risk.

Pfizer booster

The FDA has authorized a **booster** dose of the Pfizer vaccine to be given at least 6 months after the last shot for certain people. CDC says that adults ages 18 to 64 **may choose** to get the booster based on their risk. This includes people with health conditions that put them at high risk for severe COVID-19 or who are at risk for exposure to COVID-19 in their work setting, such as essential workers. Talk with your healthcare provider about your risk. The FDA is exploring booster doses of the other types of COVID-19 vaccines. No final recommendation has been made.

What are the risks to my baby?

Researchers don't exactly know yet what the risks are with COVID-19 for babies. These are some things they do know:

- High fever from any cause in the first trimester of pregnancy can raise the risk for some kinds of birth defects. Tell your healthcare provider if you have a fever. He or she will help you work to keep your fever down.
- There are only a few cases of babies found infected with COVID-19 within a few days of birth. But experts don't know if the babies picked up the virus while in the mother's womb, during childbirth, or just after.

- Preterm birth and low birth weight has happened in cases of other types of coronavirus, such as MERS, and SARS from 2003. But experts don't yet know if these are a risk with COVID-19.
- Miscarriage and stillbirth have also happened with MERS and earlier SARS. But experts don't yet know if these are a risk with COVID-19.

Is it safe to keep my healthcare appointments?

Your healthcare team may change some of your appointments to a phone call or video chat. If you need a blood test, ultrasound, or other test in person, you may need to come without your partner. Wear a mask covering both your nose and mouth as advised, use hand sanitizer, and follow all instructions from the healthcare staff at the visit to protect yourself from the virus. If you have any symptoms of COVID-19, call your healthcare office before you go to your appointment. They will give you instructions to follow.

What if someone in my home is sick with COVID-19 symptoms?

If your partner or another household member has COVID-19 symptoms, they should self-isolate. This means staying in one part of the household away from others. They should not share food, towels, sheets, or other personal items. Clean common-use surfaces often, such as doorknobs and counter tops. If your partner is sick and it's near your due date, ask your healthcare provider how best to manage when you go into labor. You may be given specific instructions.

Is it safe to give birth at a hospital or birth center?

Medical facilities are taking a lot of safety steps to protect people from COVID-19. Talk with your healthcare provider about the hospital or birth center you are planning to use. Ask where and how pregnant women and their partners and babies are protected. Keep in mind that your birth plan may need to change.

If you have COVID-19 and are in labor, call your healthcare provider and delivery unit before you arrive. Your hospital or birthing center will take steps to protect people around you from infection. You will need to wear a medical mask covering your nose and mouth. You may be in a special room that helps prevent infections from spreading. Your baby may need to be in a separate room after birth. Ask the hospital what to expect if you are pregnant and have COVID-19.

Before and after birth, you will likely be asked to limit the number of visitors at the hospital. This is important to reduce risk of infection to everyone in the hospital. Follow all healthcare staff instructions, including their instructions on how to prepare your home for when you and baby go home.

Is it safe to give birth at home?

The risks of home birth vary with each woman and each pregnancy. Talk with your healthcare team about the benefits and risks for your pregnancy. Home birth at this time may mean that emergency care could be delayed. If you were planning birth in a hospital or birth center, your healthcare provider may advise that this is still the safest plan.

Is it safe to hold my baby or breastfeed?

The virus hasn't been found in the breastmilk of women with COVID-19. But the virus can spread through coughing, sneezing, and talking. If you have or may have COVID-19, wear a mask while holding your baby or breastfeeding. Wear the mask so that it covers both your nose and mouth. Wash your hands often when caring for your baby. Your provider may advise you to pump breastmilk to be given to your child by your partner. Wash your hands before and after using the breast pump supplies. If you have COVID and want to breastfeed your baby, talk with your healthcare provider about the best ways to protect your baby.

How can I care for my baby (after discharge) if I am positive for COVID-19?

You will need to self-isolate to limit contact with your baby. You will need to wear a mask and wear clean clothes when holding or feeding your baby. Wear the mask so that it covers both your nose and mouth. You can pump breastmilk and store it to maintain your milk supply until you are no longer infectious, in 7 to 10 days. Or you can pump and have your partner use this milk to feed the baby.

Is it safe to have visitors see the baby, or help with baby care?

To be extra safe, it's best to limit visitors, especially people who are not fully vaccinated. Only the closest, healthy family members who live with you or those who are healthy and fully vaccinated should be in direct contact with the baby. **Ask anyone who is sick to not visit.** All visitors should wash their hands when they visit. Healthy unvaccinated visitors from outside your household should also wear face masks covering both their nose and mouth and keep at least 6 feet from you and the baby. If you are not fully vaccinated, it's also best to limit contact with people who are at higher risk for problems from COVID-19. This includes older adults and people with certain health conditions.

If a visitor is to hold the baby, they should wash their hands first. Wrap the baby in a blanket and then remove the blanket afterward. The visitor should then wash their hands. Visitors should not kiss or touch the baby's face. This does not apply to the closest family members unless they are sick.

When to call your healthcare provider

If you're pregnant and have COVID-19 symptoms, call your healthcare provider right away. They will ask you questions about your health. You may be advised to stay home and treat your symptoms. Or you may be advised to get medical care.

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