

## Pregnancy & COVID-19

If you're pregnant and preparing for your baby's grand arrival, it's probably safe to say that a COVID-19 pandemic was *not* part of the birth plan.

As global fears around the virus continue, you may be feeling an extra layer of stress about how this will impact your delivery — are you at risk? What about the baby (or *babies* if you're lucky)? Is it still safe to deliver in the hospital?

Although COVID-19 may have altered many aspects of our lives, you can rest assured that our commitment to helping you have a safe, joyful delivery has not changed. Now more than ever, I hope you find confidence in your OB/GYN and care team. We are here to listen to your fears, answer your questions and help you have a safe, healthy delivery.

While the following knowledge can help you make sense of how COVID-19 might impact your pregnancy, it's important to note that every woman and every delivery is different. Be sure and talk to your physician about your individual questions and health needs.

### **Are pregnant women at higher risk for COVID-19?**

In general, [pregnancy](#) is associated with immunological changes that may make a pregnant woman more susceptible to viral respiratory illnesses. However, at this time, it does not appear that pregnancy increases your risk of acquiring COVID-19. You might also be worried about facing more serious complications should you contract the virus. Based on limited data so far, we have not seen this to be the case either.

But that doesn't mean you shouldn't take precautions. The best way to protect yourself, pregnant or not, from getting the virus is to avoid exposure by following the proper handwashing, social distancing and infection safety protocols outlined by the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#).

Keep in mind that this situation remains fluid and guidelines can change from day to day. You should always consult your doctor and the CDC for the latest updates.

### **What to expect from your upcoming delivery**

The [American College of Obstetrics and Gynecologists \(ACOG\)](#) recommends that the safest place for a woman to give birth is a hospital, hospital-based birth center or accredited freestanding birth center.

If you're concerned about your upcoming delivery, rest assured that your health and your baby's health are our ultimate priority — during these pandemic days and every other day. Our teams are working diligently to maintain the highest level of safety. To that end, we have made alterations to the typical delivery experience to safeguard your health and safety, and that of all our patients and staff.

- Visitor policy changes: Based on current policy from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Baylor Scott & White Health has a “no visitor” policy in place at this time. Exceptions have been made to allow one support person over the age of 16 to accompany and stay with you during labor and postpartum.

- Two parents will be allowed to visit their baby in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU)
- No one under the age of 16 will be allowed to enter the hospital
- Risk assessment screening: COVID-19 screening measures are now in place for all visitors. Entrances may be limited and some access points may be closed. Please call ahead before arriving at a facility.
- Protective equipment: Surgical masks and other protective equipment are being used to protect both patients and staff.
- Infection control: Our facilities have employed recommended infection control practices for hospitalized pregnant women who are positive for COVID-19 or suspected of having the virus. Obstetric care providers and personnel have been appropriately trained in how and where to implement these infection control interventions.

These decisions regarding restrictions are not taken lightly and have been put in place to help ensure the safety of all patients, staff and newborns. We recognize this is not the ideal labor and delivery experience that you and your family envisioned, but please remember these guidelines are in place for your family's safety.

### **How to prepare for your baby's birth**

This is understandably a scary and stressful period for many. Social isolation, financial concerns and other questions may be weighing on your mind, not to mention the normal stresses of pregnancy and delivery-related anxiety.

But there's good news. There are steps you can take today to help you stay healthy and prepare for your little one's arrival.

### **Take precautions**

The CDC recommends that pregnant women take the same preventive measures as the general public to avoid infection, including:

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Avoid close contact with other people.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily, including doorknobs, light switches, handles, toilets, faucets, etc.

### **Stay in touch with your OB/GYN**

You may also be worried about your upcoming prenatal appointments and classes. Be sure and check with your physician about what to expect from your visits and where to go. To help minimize the spread of COVID-19, many clinics and hospitals are employing alternative schedules, offering telehealth services and using drive-thru prenatal clinics when possible. Your options will vary based on your specific facility.

If you have a high-risk pregnancy, whether you're having multiples or because of another health condition, it's especially important to talk to your doctor about how your appointments may be modified during this time. You should always feel confident and comfortable with your care and future plans. We will continue to make sure you receive necessary prenatal care, ultrasounds and other surveillance as needed.

If you're worried about what happens if you get COVID-19, talk to your doctor about your specific questions. Together, you can come up with a plan for what to do if you get the virus.

### **Take care of yourself**

Remember to take care of your body by sticking to healthy habits that are good for you and your baby, including:

- Eat healthy, nutritious meals.
- Exercise daily, being mindful to stay at home or at least 6 feet away from other people.
- Get plenty of sleep. The recommended amount for adults is 7-9 hours.
- Stay connected with family and friends by phone or online. They'll want to know how you are, and connecting with loved ones can help relieve any anxiety you're feeling.
- Talk with your doctor regarding your fears and worries related to childbirth.
- Avoid overconsuming news reports and social media regarding COVID-19.
- Rely on trustworthy sources of information, including the CDC and ACOG, as well as the Society for Maternal Fetal Medicine.

### **Stay home and nest**

Not sure what to do with all your time at home? Now is the perfect time to stay home and nest! As you look forward to the birth of your child, use this time to prepare — physically and mentally — for the big day.

- Make sure your house is prepped and ready for your little one to come home. To limit trips to the store, make sure you are well-stocked with everything you'll need after delivery.
- If you're still checking items off the list, shop online. Take precautions when opening packages: dispose of outer packing outside your home, disinfect wrapping and wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds after opening.
- Cook and freeze a week or two's worth of meals.
- Pack your hospital bags

As you approach your due date, we'll continue to keep you informed about what to expect. Our goal is to ensure you have a healthy delivery experience you can always cherish. If you have any questions about your delivery, please speak with your physician.

To learn more about COVID-19, visit [BSWHealth.com](https://www.bswhealth.com).

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