



Arkansas Department of Health

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Patient Information

Guidance for Pregnant Women with Concerns about COVID-19

Background: COVID-19 is a new coronavirus, and as result very little is known about its effect on pregnant women and infants. There is no vaccine or treatment for the virus, and currently there are no recommendations specific to pregnant women for evaluation and management. Common symptoms include fever, cough, and shortness of breath. Additional symptoms such as fatigue, sore throat, headache, nausea, loss of taste, and diarrhea have been reported. If you have a concern about symptoms call your healthcare provider before you arrive, for guidance and so that they can prepare for your arrival.

Recommendations

- **Pregnant Women:** Pregnant women do not appear to be at increased risk for developing COVID-19 infection. However, pregnancy does affect your immune system and may place you at higher risk for severe illness if you were to become infected. Prevention efforts should be made to avoid infection.
- Protect yourself: Wash your hands, avoid close contact with others, and practice social distancing by staying at least 6 feet away from others. Stay home when possible.
Protect others: Stay home if you are sick. Cover coughs and sneezes. Wear a facemask if you are sick, and clean and disinfect surfaces that are frequently touched. Anyone who is in your home who is ill with respiratory symptoms and fever should wear a mask and stay in another area of your home. They should also contact a health care provider to find out if they need evaluation for COVID-19.
- **Can COVID-19 affect my pregnancy?**
There is limited information about COVID-19 effects on pregnancy. There was not an increased risk of miscarriage or stillbirth with similar coronaviruses (SARS and MERS).
- **Transmission during pregnancy or during delivery:**
We do not know if a pregnant woman with COVID-19 can pass the virus to her baby during pregnancy or delivery. No infants born to mothers with COVID-19 have tested positive for the COVID-19 virus. In these cases, which are a small number, the virus was not found in samples of amniotic fluid or breastmilk. There are reports of newborns with COVID-19 infection, which suggests the transmission occurs from mother to baby after delivery.

- **Transmission through breastmilk:**

In limited studies on women with COVID-19 and another coronavirus infection, the virus has not been detected in breast milk. Much is unknown about COVID-19, and for mothers with confirmed COVID-19 or those who are under investigation, the CDC has no specific guidance for breastfeeding. Whether to start or continue breastfeeding should be determined by the mother in coordination with her family and healthcare providers. If the decision is made to breastfeed, the mother should take precautions to avoid spreading the virus to her infant, including washing her hands before touching the infant and wearing a face mask, if possible, while feeding at the breast. If expressing breast milk with a manual or electric breast pump, the mother should wash her hands before touching any pump or bottle parts and follow recommendations for pump cleaning after each use. If possible, consider having someone who is well feed the expressed breast milk to the infant.

- **Pregnant Healthcare Workers**

Pregnant healthcare workers should follow risk assessment and infection control guidelines for healthcare workers exposed to patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19. Information on COVID-19 in pregnancy is very limited; facilities should consider limiting exposure of pregnant healthcare workers to patients with confirmed or suspected COVID-19, especially during higher risk procedures (e.g., aerosol-generating procedures) if feasible based on staffing availability.

References:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/pregnant-women-faq.html#pregnant>

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG):

<https://www.acog.org/clinical/clinical-guidance/practice-advisory/articles/2020/03/novel-coronavirus-2019>

COVID-19 in Pregnancy, For Patients:

<https://uamshealth.com/coronavirus/2020/03/23/covid-19-in-pregnancy-for-patients/>