



Coronavirus (COVID-19) During Pregnancy: Frequently Asked Questions for Pregnant Patients

Q1. What effect does coronavirus have on pregnant women?

Generally, pregnant women do not appear to be more severely unwell than the general population if they develop coronavirus.

As this is a new virus, it is not yet clear how it may affect you. It is expected the large majority of pregnant women will experience only mild or moderate cold/flu-like symptoms.

Q2: Is it easier for pregnant women to become ill with the disease?

The available limited evidence suggests that pregnant women do not show a greater risk of acquiring COVID-19 or having severe symptoms compared to other adults. But in general, pregnant women are more susceptible to viral respiratory infections such as the flu.

Also, more severe symptoms appear to be more common in older people, those with weakened immune systems or long-term conditions. If you have an underlying condition, such as diabetes or hypertension, you may be more unwell if you have coronavirus.

The risk from immune suppression is not known, but with other viral respiratory infections, the risk for people with HIV getting very sick is greatest in:

- People with a low CD4 cell count, and
- People not on HIV treatment (antiretroviral therapy - ART).

If you have HIV and are taking your HIV medicine, it is important to continue your treatment and follow the advice of your health care provider. This is the best way to keep your immune system healthy. You should also continue to maintain a healthy lifestyle. This includes:

- Eating healthy foods
- Getting at least 8 hours of sleep
- Continuing with antenatal care
- Reducing stress as much as possible
- Staying healthy helps your immune system fight off infection should it occur.

Q3: Can COVID-19 be passed from a woman to her unborn baby or newborn?

We still do not know if a pregnant woman with COVID-19 can pass the virus to her foetus or baby during pregnancy or delivery. To date, the virus has not been found in samples of amniotic fluid or breastmilk.

Q4: What are the signs of Coronavirus?

The symptoms (the signs that show that a person may be infected with the virus) are very similar to that of a common cold or flu. It may include signs such as a fever, feeling tired, coughing, aches and pains, nasal congestion (also called a stuffy nose), runny nose, sore throat or diarrhea (a runny tummy).

If you have fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical care. Contact your clinic or doctor or call the Corona Virus (COVID-19) Hotline on 0800 029 999 for further information and advice.

If you feel your symptoms are worsening or if you are not getting better, immediately contact your health clinic or Corona Virus Outbreak 24-hour Hotline on 0800 029 999 for advice and guidance.

Q5: If pregnant women become infected, will they be more sick than other people?

Generally, pregnant women do not appear to be more severely unwell than the general population if they develop coronavirus. However, if you develop more severe symptoms or your recovery is delayed, if you feel your symptoms are worsening, or if you are not getting better, immediately contact your clinic/doctor or call the **Corona Virus Outbreak 24-hour Hotline on 0800 029 999 for further information and advice.**

Q6: What effect will coronavirus have on my unborn baby if I am diagnosed with the infection?

As this is a very new virus, to date, there is no evidence to suggest an increased risk of miscarriage.

There is also no evidence that the virus can pass to your developing baby while you are pregnant (this is called vertical transmission).

Expert opinion is that the fetus is unlikely to be exposed during pregnancy. It is therefore considered unlikely that if you have the virus, it would cause abnormalities in your baby and none have been observed currently.

Q7: I am pregnant and have fever, cough, muscle ache, sore throat and headache. Could this be COVID-19?

During pregnancy, appropriate diagnosis of and treatment for flu remains of utmost importance.

Please call your clinic/doctor to report your symptoms or **call the Corona Virus Outbreak 24-hour Hotline on 0800 029 999** for further information and advice. If there is a reason to think you may have been exposed to the new coronavirus, they will provide instructions on where you can be tested.

Q8: What can I do to reduce my risk of catching coronavirus?

- The most important thing to do is to wash your hands with soap regularly and effectively as soon as you come from public places to your home or workplace.
- If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- If you cough or sneeze, cover your nose and mouth with a flexed elbow or tissue. Remember to throw the tissue away in closed dustbin after it was used and wash your hands.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid touching anybody.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick
- Stay at home when you are sick and try to keep a distance of 1 meter from others at home.

Q9: Can I breastfeed my baby if I have COVID-19?

Yes. If you have COVID-19, you can breastfeed. You should:

- Wash your hands with soap before breastfeeding or feeding a baby and others.
- Practice respiratory hygiene during feeding, wearing a mask if possible.
- Wash your hands with soap before and after touching the baby.
- Routinely clean and disinfect surfaces.

Q10. When do I need to wash my hands?

- After coughing or sneezing
- Before, during and after you prepare food;
- Before breastfeeding or feeding a baby and others;
- Before eating
- After using the toilet
- After changing a baby's nappy
- When hands are visibly dirty
- After handling rubbish or waste
- After handling animals or animal waste

Sources: WHO, UNICEF, CDC, Johns Hopkins Medicine, NHS UK