

Effects of COVID-19 on Pregnancy & Infant Feeding

Could COVID-19 affect my pregnancy?

- The Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada states data suggest pregnant women are at neither a greater risk of infection nor a greater risk of severe morbidity (e.g. need for ICU admission or mortality) compared to non-pregnant women of the same age (March 27, 2020).
- However, since pregnant women may experience more severe symptoms than others when they contract respiratory illnesses such as COVID-19, they are considered a higher risk group.
 - Social distancing and hand hygiene practices should be carefully followed.
 - Pregnant women with complications or other health concerns may wish to practice stricter social distancing such as self-isolation, including working from home if possible.
- There is no evidence so far that the mother can transmit COVID-19 to her baby during pregnancy or that the baby's development will be affected; however, there are risks to the baby if the mother becomes very ill.
- If you experience a fever or cough during your pregnancy, contact your health care provider for guidance.

How can new mothers and babies be as safe as possible during the outbreak?

- **Practise social distancing** – Stay home as much as possible. You can still go outside to take a walk or walk your dog. Keep your distance (at least 2 metres or 6 feet) from other people if you do go out. If possible, someone else should get groceries.
- **Clean your hands often**, including before feeding or touching your baby.
- **Breastfeed as much as possible!** Breastfeeding protects against infections and is particularly effective against respiratory viruses like COVID-19.
 - If you have a newborn, or you have concerns about breastfeeding or your baby, contact our **CARELine** (613-966-5500 ext. 223 – Monday to Friday 8:30 am to 4:00 pm) or **Telehealth** (1-866-797-0000 -- 24/7) for telephone support. Our nurses are here to support you!
 - If you are breastfeeding and using bottles, try to increase the number of breastfeeds each day and reduce the number of bottles.
 - For babies older than 6 months, breastfeed as much as possible in addition to foods.
- **Keep breastfeeding as long as possible.**
 - Feed at the breast often to maintain or build your milk production.
 - Postpone weaning until after the pandemic. Breastfeeding protects your baby from infection.
- **Prepare formula and bottles carefully.**
 - Maintain social distancing when buying formula.
 - Clean hands, surfaces and formula package before preparing formula.
 - Follow safe preparation guidelines, especially for powdered formula. You may need information to prepare a different formula than usual.
 - For information read [Infant Formula: What You Need to Know](#) or call the **CARELine** (613-966-5500 ext. 233).
 - All bottles and feeding equipment for formula feeding need to be cleaned well in hot, soapy water, then sterilized by boiling for 2 minutes.
- **Handle expressed breast milk (EBM) carefully.** (If possible, feed directly at the breast.)
 - Clean hands before expressing or pumping.
 - After each use, clean pump parts, bottles and nipples well in hot, soapy water, rinse in hot water, cover and air dry. In an abundance of caution at this time, you may also wish to sterilize all feeding equipment. (Boil for 2 minutes.)

- Store EBM carefully in very clean or sterilized containers. Refrigerate EBM and keep cool until just before feeding. Avoid storing EBM at room temperature at this time.
- For information read [Expressing and Storing Breast Milk](#) or call the **CARELine** at 613-966-5500 ext. 223.

Should I keep breastfeeding if I become ill with COVID-19?

Yes! Keep breastfeeding your baby because it provides support for the immune system.

- If you are too ill to breastfeed, you may be able to express or pump your milk for your baby.
- Handle expressed breast milk carefully, as outlined above.
- The Public Health Agency of Canada recommends the following:
For breastfeeding mothers: considering the benefits of breastfeeding and the insignificant role of breast milk in transmission of other respiratory viruses, breastfeeding can continue. If the breastfeeding mother is a [probable or confirmed] case, she should wear a surgical/procedure mask when near the baby, practice respiratory etiquette, and perform hand hygiene before and after close contact with the baby.

What if I have general questions about COVID-19?

- If your primary concern is suspected COVID-19 infection and not a pregnancy concern, please **do not come** to Quinte 7 Maternal Child Unit. Follow the community guidelines already in place through Public Health by accessing the website at [hpePublicHealth](#), calling Telehealth at 1-866-797-0000, or calling the COVID-19 Information Line at 613-966-5500 ext 110 / Toll Free 1-800-267-2803 TTY: Dial 711 Website: www.hpepublichealth.ca
- Additional info on COVID-19 and pregnancy / infant feeding is on the HPEPH website.

QHC - Quinte 7 Maternal Child Unit - Pregnant Patients who have a booked appointment

- Please expect a screening phone call.
- If you have not received a phone call prior to leaving for your booked appointment, call QHC – Quinte 7 Maternal Child Unit at 613-969-7400 x 2345.
- QHC asks that the patient **not** bring a support person with them to the booked appointment.

QHC-7 - Maternal Child Unit: Information for Pregnant Patients / Maternity Patients

- All pregnant patients prior to coming to QHC- Quinte 7 Maternal Child Unit for **any reason** need to call ahead to be pre-screened. Call the Maternal Child Unit at 613-969-7400 x 2345.
- This pre-screening precaution is in place due to COVID-19.
- The pre-screening will allow the healthcare team to be prepared for your arrival.
- QHC is allowing only **one person** to accompany a patient in labour as a support person.
- Please make sure your support person packs enough clothing / toiletries / snacks for a few days since they will **not** be allowed to return to the hospital if they need to leave at any time.
- [CDC-COVID-19, Pregnancy and Breastfeeding](#)
- [Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine Statement on Corona Virus 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Safely Fed Canada COVID-19 Resources](#)
- [Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada](#)
- [Royal College of OB-GYN – Corona Virus and Pregnancy](#)

We are committed to providing accessible publications, programs and services to all. For assistance, please call 613-966-5500; TTY: 711 or email accessibility@hpeph.ca. For more information, please visit hpePublicHealth.ca