Breastfeeding

Can I breastfeed if I have COVID-19?

Breast milk provides protection against many illnesses. Women are often encouraged to continue breastfeeding or providing breast milk even when they are sick with a virus, such as the flu. Information about COVID-19 in breastfeeding women is limited at this time, but no virus was found in milk samples provided by a small number of women with COVID-19.

Women who are breastfeeding while sick with COVID-19 can help protect their babies from infection by:

- washing their hands frequently
- wearing a face mask while nursing
- pumping milk to feed their baby while they recover
- Women should talk with their healthcare providers about any questions related to breastfeeding.

Community Health & Wellness Center
36 Thomas Indian School Dr.
Irving, NY 14081
716-532-8223

Cattaraugus Indian Reservation Health Center
36 Thomas Indian School Dr.
Irving, NY 14081
716-532-5582

Lionel R. John Health Center
987 R.C. Hoag Dr.
Salamanca, NY 14779
716-945-5894

Coronavirus, Pregnancy and Breastfeeding

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Data is current as of 3/23/2020
COVID-19 is a respiratory illness caused by a virus. This virus belongs to a group called coronaviruses. The most common symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, cough, and shortness of breath, although some people have only mild or no symptoms. In more severe cases, infection can cause pneumonia, respiratory failure, and death.

The virus that causes COVID-19 is easily spread by close person-to-person contact. When an infected person coughs or sneezes, the virus can spread to others who are nearby.

**Protect Yourself:**

- avoid close contact with anyone who has symptoms of coughing or sneezing
- wash your hands frequently using soap and water, avoid touching your or your child's face and clean/disinfect frequently touched surfaces
- Pregnant women can also reduce their chance of exposure to the virus by staying home as much as possible

**What is COVID-19?**

COVID-19 is a respiratory illness caused by a virus. This virus belongs to a group called coronaviruses. The most common symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, cough, and shortness of breath, although some people have only mild or no symptoms. In more severe cases, infection can cause pneumonia, respiratory failure, and death.

**Common Questions**

Can COVID-19 be passed from a pregnant woman to the fetus or newborn?

We still do not know if a pregnant woman with COVID-19 can pass the virus. 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.

If a pregnant woman has COVID-19 during pregnancy, will it hurt the baby?

We do not know at this time what if any risk is posed to infants. There have been a small number of reported problems with pregnancy or delivery (e.g. preterm birth) in babies born to mothers who tested positive for COVID-19 during their pregnancy. However, it is not clear that these outcomes were related to maternal infection.

Should I still attend my doctors appointments?

If you are well, you should attend your appointments as normal. If you have symptoms of possible coronavirus infection, you should contact your health care provider to postpone routine visits until after the isolation period is over. Please contact your doctor for advice and a plan for future appointments.

What happens if I go into labor and I think I have COVID-19?

If you go into labor, you should call your maternity unit or doctor for advice, and inform them that you have suspected or confirmed coronavirus infection.

If you have mild symptoms, you will be encouraged to remain at home (self-isolating) in early labor, as per standard practice.

Your maternity team has been advised on ways to ensure that you and your baby receive safe, quality care, respecting your birth choices as closely as possible.

When you need to deliver:

- You will be advised to get to the hospital via private transport
- You will be met at the maternity unit entrance and provided with a surgical face mask, which will need to stay on until you are isolated in a suitable room
- Coronavirus testing will be arranged
- Your birth partner will be able to stay with you throughout, but no visitors at this time

Resources:

https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/covid-19/