

COVID-19 and pregnancy

This information sheet aims to answer some commonly asked questions about COVID-19 and pregnancy.

IMPORTANT: This is general information only. Ask your doctor or midwife about what care is right for you.

What is COVID-19 and coronavirus?

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) is an illness caused by a virus. The corona virus can spread easily when an infected person breathes out, coughs, sneezes, or touches objects or other people.

Is it safe to get vaccinated during pregnancy?

Vaccination is strongly recommended for pregnant women. Many pregnant women around the world have had the vaccine and no serious problems have been found. If you haven't had your vaccine yet, talk with your health care provider about getting it for you and your family. You can get vaccinated at any stage of your pregnancy.

Can you have a booster vaccination while pregnant?

Yes, a booster dose is recommended for pregnant women the same as for the general community.

Can you get COVID-19 after being vaccinated?

Yes, you can still catch COVID-19 after being vaccinated but the symptoms are usually mild. You are much less likely to get very sick, need hospital care or have problems in your pregnancy if you have been vaccinated.

Can COVID-19 be prevented?

The best way to protect yourself is to get vaccinated and avoid contact with the virus. You can do this by:

- washing your hands regularly and frequently—use soap and water for 20 seconds or alcohol-based hand sanitiser/gel
- staying 1.5 metres away from other people (social distance) and wear a mask over nose and mouth
- avoiding anyone who has a fever, cough or symptoms of a cold or chest infection
- avoiding touching your eyes, nose and mouth

Is it safe to come to hospital?

Hospitals are a safe place to have your baby and to come for care when you need it. Preventing the spread of COVID-19 is a top priority. People with symptoms of COVID-19 are cared for in separate areas. The way care is offered may change as we continue to learn more about COVID-19. This can include:

- hand washing, mask wearing and social distancing
- care in the community rather than in hospital
- care by video or phone before and/or after birth
- limiting the number of support people and visitors coming into the hospital (to help reduce the chance of spreading the infection)
- if you have COVID-19, you may need to give birth or be cared for at an identified COVID-19 hospital or in a special room. You will still have maternity staff (doctors and midwives) looking after you

Will COVID-19 affect your pregnancy?

COVID-19 can cause very serious problems for both you and your baby during pregnancy. Unfortunately, a small number of pregnant women and their babies have died from COVID-19. Others have become very sick in hospital.

If you are not vaccinated, you are more likely to need hospital care, especially if you:

- are older (more than 35 years)
- are overweight
- have an underlying health problem (e.g. diabetes, hypertension or asthma)



Image Pregnant woman getting vaccinated



Will having COVID-19 affect your birth plan?

It depends on how well or how sick you are, and what things are important to you for your birth. Talk with your healthcare provider about any concerns you may have and about what care is right for you.

Type of birth

If you are well, having COVID-19 will not by itself change how your baby is born. However, if you are booked for an induction of labour or caesarean birth, and get COVID-19, tell your health care provider immediately.

Monitoring during labour

If you are unwell with COVID-19, continuous monitoring of your baby during labour is recommended. This is because some babies (whose mothers had COVID-19) showed signs of distress during labour. Continually monitoring your baby can help detect problems early. This recommendation is the same as for other infections during labour.

Pain relief

If you have COVID-19, you can still have most types of pain relief including an epidural or a spinal block. If you use nitrous oxide ("gas"), special tubing and filters are used to help prevent the spread of the virus.

Support people

The number of people you can have with you during your birth may be reduced. This is to help prevent the virus from spreading. Having one person who can stay with you for the whole time is usually what is recommended.

Water birth

If you are unwell with COVID-19, water birth is not recommended. This is because women in labour can become very sick very quickly. Getting out of the birth pool can take time and be hard for some women. This may delay urgent care if you and your baby need it.

Place of birth

In Queensland, some hospitals have been identified as COVID-19 hospitals. Having the right set-up, equipment and facilities (like special rooms and special ventilation) can help prevent the spread of the virus. If you have COVID-19, (and you are well enough) you may need to be transferred to one of the COVID-19 hospitals to give birth.

Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding is safe and is encouraged whether you have COVID-19 or not. You may like to read the breastfeeding information sheet.

Will COVID-19 affect your baby?

The risk of COVID-19 passing to your baby during pregnancy is thought to be low. No problems with how babies grow and develop before birth have been linked to having COVID-19 during pregnancy. If you get very sick your baby might need to be born early (prematurely) and need extra care in a neonatal unit (nursery).

What about after your baby is born?

You and your baby will have access to all routine postnatal care as well as individualised advice and checks. A few babies may need extra care.

Staying together

Keeping a well mother and well baby together is usually best. Well mothers and well babies can usually stay together in quarantine/isolation. If you are unwell, one option may be for your baby to go home with a well adult (e.g. well partner or relative).

Prevent the spread of COVID-19

If you have COVID-19, it is important to do everything you can to prevent your baby getting the virus. This means:

- wash your hands before and after touching your baby—use soap and water for 20 seconds or alcohol based hand sanitiser/gel
- routinely clean and disinfect surfaces you have touched
- have a healthy adult assist you to care for your baby where possible
- wear a mask while in close contact including while breastfeeding

Visiting your baby in the neonatal unit

If your baby needs extra care in a neonatal unit (nursery) you will not be able to visit while you have COVID-19. Hospital staff will keep you up to date with how your baby is doing. This might be with videos, telephone calls and photographs.

Will your baby be tested for COVID-19?

If you have COVID-19, testing your baby is recommended.

When should you self-quarantine/isolate?

Follow current Queensland Health advice about self-quarantine/isolation. If you have been told to self-quarantine/isolate, stay inside and avoid contact with others for 14 days.

This means:

- do not go to school, work or public areas including shops
- do not use public transport
- stay at home and have no visitors to your home
- ventilate rooms by opening windows
- separate yourself from other members of the household, (including for sleeping) where possible

Can you go to appointments if in self-quarantine/isolation?

No, you should not go in person to a routine appointment. Instead, phone your healthcare provider or hospital to:

- Tell them you are currently in self-quarantine/isolation for possible or confirmed COVID-19
- Request advice about your care

What if you go into labour during self-quarantine/isolation?

If you think you are in labour, call ahead to the hospital, or your healthcare provider. If you need to call an ambulance tell them you are in self-quarantine/isolation.

If you are not sure if you have COVID-19, you may be able to have a COVID-19 test that can give a rapid result. Your healthcare provider will talk with you about this.

What if you or your baby are unwell during self-quarantine/isolation?

If you (or your baby) become unwell (e.g. have a fever or shortness of breath, cough or a chest infection) while in self-quarantine/isolation seek immediate medical attention. Call ahead to your general practitioner (GP) or emergency department and tell them about your situation before you arrive. If you need to call an ambulance tell them you are in self-quarantine/isolation.

Support & Information

13HEALTH (13 432584) is a phone line that provides health information, referral and services to the public. <https://www.qld.gov.au/health/contacts/advice/13health>

Queensland Health COVID-19 General information about COVID-19 <https://www.qld.gov.au/health/conditions/health-alerts/coronavirus-covid-19>

Partnering with the woman who declines recommended maternity care. Guideline and associated resources for consumers and clinicians <https://www.health.qld.gov.au/consent/html/pwdrmc>

MumSpace: Digital resources supporting mental and emotional wellbeing during and beyond pregnancy. <https://www.mumspace.com.au>

PANDA (Perinatal Anxiety and Depression Australia.) Supports women and their families who are suffering from perinatal anxiety or depression <https://www.panda.org.au>

Pregnancy, Birth & Baby Helpline 1800 882 436 (free call) offers free, confidential, professional information and counselling for women, their partners and families relating to issues of conception, pregnancy, birthing and postnatal care. www.health.gov.au/pregnancyhelpline

Lifeline 13 11 14 Lifeline offers a telephone crisis support service to anyone. www.lifeline.org.au

Child Health Service Provides newborn drop-in services, early feeding and support child health clinics. Refer to www.childrens.health.qld.gov.au/community-health/child-health-service for your nearest service

Women's Health Queensland Wide 1800 017 676 (free call) offers health promotion, information and education service for women and health professionals throughout Queensland. www.womhealth.org.au

Australian Breastfeeding Association 1800 686268 (breastfeeding helpline). Community based self-help group offers information, counselling, and support services, on breastfeeding issues www.breastfeeding.asn.au