

Pregnancy and COVID-19

Cedars-Sinai's Maternal-Fetal Medicine experts want to address some of the special concerns our patients may have regarding pregnancy and childbirth, and the coronavirus. We have prepared answers to frequently asked questions we hope will be helpful. Information regarding the coronavirus and the best practices in healthcare for reducing rates of infection are evolving all the time, please go to the main page of the [Cedars-Sinai website](#) for reliable information on current hospital policy.

What is coronavirus (COVID-19)?

COVID-19 is the disease caused by a novel coronavirus that spreads through close personal contact via respiratory droplets. This usually requires being within 6 feet of a person with COVID-19 for a prolonged period or having direct contact with secretions such as in the case of healthcare workers.

What symptoms does COVID-19 cause?

According to the CDC, the most consistent symptoms are **fever, cough, and shortness of breath** which begin about 5-7 days after contracting the virus. More worrisome symptoms for which you should seek emergency care include trouble breathing, chest pain, confusion or inability to arouse, or bluish lips/face.

Is COVID-19 more dangerous for pregnant women than non-pregnant?

Research on pregnancy and the coronavirus is very limited, and the low rates of testing make it difficult to know how many pregnant women are infected. However, pregnant women do not seem to have had significantly worse outcomes from COVID-19 compared to non-pregnant women.

Like everyone else, it is important to follow behaviors that we know help reduce the risk of infection such as frequent hand washing, avoiding people who are sick, avoid touching your face, and practicing social distancing.

What should I do if I think I have symptoms of COVID-19?

If you develop symptoms that concern you, we recommend you contact your primary care physician or obstetrician so they can help you clarify your actual risk. Most patients who have flu-like symptoms or are concerned they may have the coronavirus can be evaluated at a clinic or an urgent care center. Only go to the emergency room if you have life-threatening symptoms like difficulty breathing or chest pain.

Do I need to take special precautions during pregnancy or if we're trying to get pregnant?

There are no precautions that are unique to pregnant women or those trying to get pregnant. We recommend the same precautions being given to the general public including frequent hand washing, not touching your face, avoiding unnecessary travel/gathering, and in many states (including California) sheltering in place.

If I get COVID-19 while pregnant, can I transmit the virus to my baby during pregnancy?

The virus has not been found in cord blood or amniotic fluid which we would expect if it had been transmitted while the baby was in the uterus. We have also not seen any evidence of birth defects associated with COVID-19 infection. That said, specific research is very limited. There have been a few babies who tested positive for the virus soon after they were born, and fortunately all did well in the newborn period.

Can I transmit the virus to my baby during breastfeeding?

Current research suggests that the virus does not pass through breastmilk. However, since direct breastfeeding does involve close personal contact, it is recommended that precautions – including washing hands thoroughly prior to each feed and wearing a facemask during feeding.

In addition, Cedars-Sinai agrees with the CDC recommendation of temporary separation of the newborn immediately after birth for all mothers who test positive or are likely to have Covid-19. This practice is intended to reduce the risk of transmission of the virus to the baby. We will assess the status of both the mother and the child to determine how quickly they can be reunited.

Should I have a home birth or deliver in a birth center to avoid infection in the hospital?

We do not recommend changing your birth plan to a home birth or birth center solely for the purpose of lowering the risk of infection by the coronavirus. There is no data to support the belief that giving birth outside of a hospital lowers the risk of getting COVID-19. Hospitals are required to adhere to strict disinfection guidelines and healthcare workers must be screened for contagious disease before working with patients. Also, labor and delivery staff are trained well for emergencies that can occur during childbirth.

According to the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology, home births are not recommended for women who have had high-risk pregnancies, have had C-sections in the past or if the baby is not positioned correctly for birth. Research also indicates a higher risk of seizures or brain damage for babies in home births, for some women.

What other steps is Cedars-Sinai taking to care of pregnant women in labor and delivery during the coronavirus outbreak?

Cedars-Sinai is taking several steps to ensure the safety of our patients, staff, and providers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Cedars-Sinai follows the national CDC, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, and Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine recommendations for the highest possible safety and patient care. Additional precautions include:

- Limiting visitors to one person for each pregnant patient and only while she is in Labor and Delivery
- Prohibiting visitors for patients who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or are under investigation for infection by the coronavirus. This is true for ALL hospitalized patients
- Eliminating all elective surgeries and procedures throughout the hospital
- Healthcare worker screening
- Designated COVID-19 Patient Care Team for the shift to minimize care giver exposure if there are suspected cases
- Designated COVID-19 triage and labor rooms
- Pediatric protocols for babies born to suspected COVID-19 mothers

We understand that these changes will impact the birth experience, but we are committed to doing everything we can to protect your health and ensure your safety and the health of your baby. These are unprecedented times for our nation's health and well-being, and we hope you will partner with us to provide you and your family the best possible care.

Where can I go for more information?

For the latest information regarding COVID-19 and pregnant women and children, please see the CDC website [Information on COVID-19 and Pregnant Women and Children](#).