



COVID-19 in pregnancy

What is COVID-19 and coronavirus?

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) is the disease caused by a new coronavirus named SARS-CoV-2 and is easily passed from person to person. In most people with good health, COVID-19 is mild. Severe illness, such as pneumonia are more common in older people and those who have other illnesses.

How will COVID-19 affect you?

As this is a new virus, we are still learning how it may affect you and your baby. Our understanding currently is from women who got the virus late in their pregnancy. There is no information yet about women who may have had an infection in early pregnancy.

At this time, pregnant women do not appear to be more severely unwell if they develop COVID-19 infection than the general population. It is expected that most pregnant women who get the virus will experience only mild or moderate cold/flu like symptoms.

However, any respiratory illness (such as influenza) can cause serious complications, so it is advised that pregnant women take extra precautions in practising good hygiene and social distancing to reduce the risk of getting COVID-19.

If you also are a smoker, have a heart or lung condition such as asthma, or other long-term condition, you may become more unwell than a pregnant woman who doesn't. It is important that you tell your maternity health care provider if you have other health conditions.

How will COVID-19 affect your baby?

The risk of infection passing from mother to baby during pregnancy is thought to be low. So far, the virus has not been shown to pass from the mother to her baby before birth (this is called vertical transmission).

Some babies born to women with COVID-19 have been born early (prematurely). In most cases the decision was made for the baby to be born early because the mother was unwell.

Viral infections, such as the flu can cause a high fever. If you have a high fever at any stage of your pregnancy call your healthcare provider or the National Coronavirus Helpline 1800 020 080.

Is it safe to come to hospital?

High quality maternity and newborn services continue to be provided. To reduce the chance of you, your baby and the staff looking after you getting COVID-19, hospitals may change the way care is provided including:

- providing care in the community rather than in hospital
- offering care by video or phone

- limiting the number of support people and visitors coming into the hospital (this will help to reduce the chance of spreading the infection)
- promoting hand hygiene, other infection control procedures and social distancing.

Can COVID-19 be prevented or cured?

There is no vaccine to prevent COVID-19 yet (but a lot of people are working on it). There is also no cure or specific treatment for it. The best thing to do is to reduce your chance of getting the infection in the first place.

You can do this by:

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

If you are unwell:

- telephone your healthcare provider as soon as possible
- take paracetamol for fever or pain, as per instructions on the packaging (avoid medications that contain ibuprofen if possible)
- rest and drink plenty of water.

What if you or your family has COVID-19?

If you think you or a family member might have COVID-19, access the [Coronavirus Symptom Checker](#), call your general practitioner (GP) or the National Coronavirus Helpline 1800 020 080.

When should you self-isolate?

Self-isolate for 14 days if you have:

- tested positive for COVID-19, you must self-isolate in your home (or other suitable accommodation) until you have been told you can be released from isolation.
- been tested for COVID-19, you must isolate yourself in your home (or other suitable accommodation) while you are waiting for your result.
- been in close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19, you must isolate yourself in your home (or other suitable accommodation) for 14 days after the date of last contact with the confirmed case.
- arrived into Western Australia from interstate by air, sea, rail or road in the last 14 days, you must self-isolate in your home (or other suitable accommodation) for 14 days from the date of arrival (some exemptions may apply).
- returned from overseas in the last 14 days, you will be subject to mandatory self-isolation for 14 days at your first Australian destination. Suitable accommodation will be made available. You will not be permitted to return home or transit to another state until your 14 day self-isolation period is completed.

How do you self-isolate?

If you have been advised to self-isolate, stay indoors and avoid contact with others.

health.wa.gov.au

This means:

- not going to school, work or public areas
- not using public transport
- staying at home and not bringing visitors to your home
- ventilate rooms by opening windows
- sleeping apart, where possible
- using your own linen
- using your own cutlery and utensils
- separating yourself from other members of the household, where possible
- increasing cleaning of shared areas.

Can you come to antenatal appointments if in self-isolation?

Contact your healthcare provider or hospital to:

- inform them that you are currently in self-isolation for suspected or confirmed COVID-19
- request advice on attending routine antenatal appointments.

What if you feel unwell or are worried during self-isolation?

If you begin to feel unwell (have a fever or shortness of breath, cough or a respiratory illness) while in self-isolation seek immediate medical attention. Call ahead to your general practitioner (GP) or emergency department and tell them about your situation before you arrive.

What if I go into labour during self-isolation?

If you go into labour, call the hospital, or your healthcare provider. Tell them that you have or might have COVID-19 infection. They will give you advice.

Our hospitals take great care to limit the spread of disease between patients. They are fully equipped to care for pregnant women with COVID-19 or are in self isolation.

Will COVID-19 affect your birth plan?

Having COVID-19 will not by itself affect how your baby is born. If you are booked for an induction of labour or caesarean section, and have suspected or confirmed COVID-19, notify your health care provider immediately to discuss a plan.

There is no evidence that women with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 cannot have an epidural or use nitrous oxide. This will be discussed with you.

If you have been confirmed as positive or are suspected of having COVID-19, continuous monitoring of your baby in labour is recommended (but is not compulsory). This is because some babies (whose mothers had COVID-19) showed signs of distress during labour.

Monitoring can help detect problems as early as possible. This recommendation is the same as for other infections in pregnancy. Talk to your healthcare provider about any concerns you may have.

The number of support people you can have with you during your labour is limited to one and choose someone who can stay with you for the whole time.

Will having COVID-19 affect contact with my baby?

In most cases keeping a mother and baby together is best. If either of you are very unwell this may not be possible. Your healthcare provider will talk with you about what you want and what your choices are. If you are very unwell, one option may be for your baby to go home with a well adult (e.g. well partner or relative).

If you have or may have COVID-19 it is important to do everything you can to prevent your baby getting the virus, even if you don't have symptoms. This is why it is very important that you:

- wash your hands before and after touching your baby-use soap and water for at least 20 seconds or an 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 with your baby, including while feeding

A small number of babies may develop mild or moderate symptoms in the weeks following birth and some may require additional hospital care. If your baby becomes unwell following birth, contact your GP or hospital. Call ahead and advise them you have/had COVID-19.

Will your baby be tested for COVID-19?

The need for testing your baby will be determined by the symptoms your baby has. In general, well babies will not be tested.

Last updated 20 April 2020

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with disability.

© Department of Health 2020

Copyright to this material is vested in the State of Western Australia unless otherwise indicated. Apart from any fair dealing for the purposes of private study, research, criticism or review, as permitted under the provisions of the *Copyright Act 1968*, no part may be reproduced or re-used for any purposes whatsoever without written permission of the State of Western Australia.