

# FROM THE DOCTORS OF OUR COMMUNITY

## A NOTE ON PREGNANCY

### **Are pregnant women at higher risk of getting COVID-19?**

At this time, it is not clear whether pregnant women are at higher risk of getting COVID-19. However, pregnant women in general are considered high-risk of having complications from most respiratory infections (since the immune system is weaker during pregnancy). Therefore, pregnant women should be especially cautious during the current COVID-19 pandemic with regard to "social distancing," thorough and frequent hand washing, and other isolation measures to prevent infection or exposure to the virus.

### **How does COVID-19 affect the pregnancy and fetus?**

Previous respiratory illnesses (e.g. SARS) have been linked to preterm birth, problems with fetal growth, and miscarriage. As COVID-19 is a relatively new virus, its effects on pregnancy are not yet fully understood. However, at this time, having confirmed or suspected COVID-19 infection would not change how or when you will give birth (in most non-severe cases).

### **What if a pregnant woman has been exposed to COVID-19?**

If you have fever, cough, shortness of breath, or gastrointestinal symptoms, we advise you call your OB provider or primary physician who will guide you on the next steps (which might be to stay home, rest, and hydrate). In general, each OB/GYN office will have their own policies that may affect your future appointments. Call your doctor for more information.

### **Are there any considerations for labor and delivery of pregnant women with COVID-19?**

Being infected with COVID-19 during labor does not mean that you need a C-Section for delivery. Many hospitals will only allow one visitor for the entirety of the hospital stay if the mother is infected, but individual hospital policy may vary. In certain circumstances, a mother may have to limit contact or temporarily separate from her newborn.

### **What should women do when they return home with their newborn?**

Hospitals will provide detailed discharge instructions for new mothers who are positive for COVID-19. In general, there should be no visitors (including nurses and elderly grandparents) unless they are absolutely essential to the well-being of the mother or child and strict hygienic practices should be performed. If the mother and newborn are not affected by COVID-19, having visitors such as a nurse in the home or elderly grandparents is discouraged as well for the purposes of social distancing.

### **Can women infected with COVID-19 breastfeed?**

There is no evidence that COVID-19 is transmitted through the breastmilk of infected women, and breastfeeding is still encouraged! If mother and infant are separated (due to quarantine), a breast pump should be used to express milk. Hand hygiene should be performed before pumping, and all parts of the pump should be thoroughly washed and disinfected (follow manufacturer instructions) after pumping. If possible, a healthy caregiver should feed the infant. If a breastfeeding mother is unable to express enough

Please note that this letter was composed in an expedited fashion as a response to the current quickly changing situation. We apologize in advance for any errors or omissions. We also welcome comments and any other doctors who would like to have their name added to future versions and updates. Please email us at [info@scaupdates.org](mailto:info@scaupdates.org)

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milk for her infant, she may breastfeed directly using hand hygiene and while wearing a mask, and she should avoid touching other parts of the body while feeding. If you have questions, please discuss with your doctor first.

### **Should couples avoid getting pregnant?**

If one or both partners are ill or positive for COVID-19 they should avoid trying to conceive during this menstrual cycle out of an abundance of caution. If the couple feels well, they can proceed with attempting to conceive. Fertility treatments are generally not being performed at this time by fertility clinics so that resources can be used to fight the epidemic and to avoid non-essential contacts leading to exposures.

Respectfully,

The Community Doctors