

# Guidance for pregnancy and breastfeeding

## Frequently asked questions

### **Q1. What effect does coronavirus have on pregnant women?**

Generally, pregnant women do not appear to be more likely to be severely unwell than other healthy adults if they develop the new coronavirus. It is expected that the large majority of pregnant women will experience only mild or moderate cold/flu like symptoms.

More severe symptoms such as pneumonia appear to be more common in older people, those with weakened immune systems or long-term conditions. As yet, there is no evidence that pregnant women who get this infection are more at risk of serious complications than any other healthy individuals.

If you think you may have symptoms of COVID-19 you should call the [Helpline](#) service for information. If you develop more severe symptoms or your recovery is delayed this may be a sign that you are developing a more significant chest infection that requires enhanced care. Our advice remains that if you feel your symptoms are worsening or if you are not getting better you should contact the Covid-19 Helpline 445566 unit for further information and advice or if you require urgent assistance call 999.

### **Q2. What effect will coronavirus have on my baby if I am diagnosed with the infection?**

As this is a very new virus we are just beginning to learn about it. There is no evidence to suggest an increased risk of miscarriage.

There is also no evidence that the virus can pass to your baby while you are pregnant or during birth (this is called vertical transmission). Expert opinion is that the baby is unlikely to be exposed during pregnancy. It is considered unlikely that if you have the virus it would cause problems with the baby's development.

### **Q3. What can I do to reduce my risk of catching coronavirus?**

The most important thing to do is to strictly follow the current government advice on [www.gov.je](http://www.gov.je).

### **Q4. Why are pregnant women in a vulnerable group?**

Pregnant women were placed in a vulnerable group by the Medical Officer for Health, Jersey. Based on the evidence we have so far, pregnant women are still no more likely to contract coronavirus than the general population. What we do know is that pregnancy in a small proportion of women can alter how your body handles severe viral infections. This is something that midwives and obstetricians have known for many years and are used to dealing with. As yet, there is no evidence that pregnant women who get this infection are more at risk of serious complications than any other healthy individuals.

What has driven the decisions made by officials to place pregnant women in the vulnerable category is caution. We know that some viral infections are worse in pregnant women. At the moment, there's no evidence that this is the case for coronavirus infection, but the amount of evidence available is still quite limited.

**Q5. Can I still go to work?**

Please see the current advice for vulnerable groups on [www.gov.je](http://www.gov.je).

**Q6. Should I attend my antenatal appointments?**

- Attending antenatal and postnatal care when you are pregnant and have a new baby is important to ensure the wellbeing of you and your baby;
- **From Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020 ALL women who are booked for an antenatal appointment in a GP surgery will be seen in a centrally located clinic and the community midwives will contact you to advise where that will take place or whether it will be carried out by telephone;**
- You will be phoned prior to attending the clinic to check if you are well enough to attend. The midwife will also use the initial phone call as an opportunity to answer any questions you might have. This is in order to minimise the length contact you will have in the appointment.

If you have symptoms of possible coronavirus infection, you should contact the midwife/antenatal clinic to postpone routine visits until after the isolation period is over.

At this time, it is particularly important that you help your maternity team are here to help take care of you and your baby. If you have had an appointment cancelled or delayed and are not sure of your next contact with your maternity team, please let them know by using the contact numbers provided to you at booking.

The following practical advice may be helpful:

- If you have a routine scan, appointment or visit due in the coming days, please contact your midwife or antenatal clinic for advice and a plan. You will still need to attend but the appointment may change due to staffing requirements;
- Some appointments may be conducted on the telephone or using videoconferencing, provided there is a reasonable expectation that maternal observations or tests are not required;
- If you are between appointments, please wait to hear from your maternity team;
- If you are attending more regularly in pregnancy, then your maternity team will be in touch with plans;
- If you miss an appointment and haven't heard from your maternity team, please contact them to rearrange the appointment.

Whatever your personal situation please consider the following:

- If you have any concerns, you will still be able to contact your maternity team but please note they may take longer to get back to you;

- If you have a problem related to your pregnancy but not related to coronavirus, get in touch using the same contact details you already have. Please do not contact this number unless you have a pregnancy related problem;
- If you have symptoms suggestive of coronavirus contact your maternity services and they will arrange the right place and time to come for your visits. You should not attend a routine clinic;
- You will be asked to attend appointments alone. This will include being asked to not bring children with you to maternity appointments;
- There may be a need to reduce the number of antenatal visits. This will be communicated with you. Do not reduce the number of your visits without consultation with your maternity team.

**Q7. What should I do if I think I may have coronavirus or been exposed?**

If you are pregnant and you have symptoms of coronavirus you should call the Covid-19 helpline, 445566 for advice.

If you have concerns about the wellbeing of yourself or your unborn baby during your isolation period, contact the midwife / antenatal clinic. They will provide further advice, including whether you need to attend hospital.

**Q8. What should I do if I test positive for coronavirus?**

If you test positive for coronavirus, you should contact your midwife or antenatal team to make them aware of your diagnosis. If you have no symptoms, or mild symptoms, you will be advised to recover at home. If you have more severe symptoms, you might be treated in a hospital setting.

**Q9. Can I still attend my antenatal appointments if I have possible or confirmed coronavirus?**

You should contact your midwife /antenatal clinic to inform them that you are currently in isolation for possible / confirmed coronavirus and request advice on attending routine antenatal appointments.

It is likely that routine antenatal appointments will be delayed until isolation ends. If your midwife or doctor advises that your appointment cannot wait, the necessary arrangements will be made for you to be seen. For example, you may be asked to attend at a different time, or in a different clinic, to protect others.

**Q10. How will my care be managed after I have recovered from coronavirus?**

If you have recovered from coronavirus and tested negative for the virus before you go into labour, where and how you give birth will not be affected by your previous illness. Visitor numbers are being restricted to promote recommended social distancing.

**Q11. What do I do if I feel unwell or I'm worried about my baby during self-isolation?**

Pregnant women who are isolating are advised not to attend maternity or A&E unless in need of urgent pregnancy or medical care.

If you have concerns about the wellbeing of yourself or your unborn baby during your isolation period, contact your midwife / antenatal unit. They will provide further advice, including whether you need to attend hospital.

If attendance at the maternity unit or hospital is advised, pregnant women are requested to travel by private transport, or arrange hospital transport. You must ring the maternity unit before you enter the hospital and a midwife you at the door.

**Q12. Will being in isolation for suspected or confirmed coronavirus affect how I give birth?**

There is currently no evidence to suggest you cannot give birth vaginally or that you would be safer having a caesarean birth if you have suspected or confirmed coronavirus.

However, if your respiratory condition (breathing) suggests that your baby needs to be born urgently, a caesarean birth may be recommended.

It is not recommended that you give birth in a birthing pool in hospital if you have suspected or coronavirus, as the virus can sometimes be found in faeces. It may also be more difficult for healthcare staff to use adequate protection equipment during a water birth.

There is no evidence that women with suspected or confirmed coronavirus cannot have an epidural or a spinal block.

**Q13. What happens if I go into labour during my isolation period?**

If you go into labour, you should call your maternity unit 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 in early labour, as per standard practice.

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

**Q14. Could I pass coronavirus to my baby?**

As this is a new virus, there is limited evidence about caring for women with coronavirus infection in women who have just given birth. A small number of babies have been diagnosed with coronavirus shortly after birth, but it remains unclear whether transmission was prior to or soon after birth. Expert opinion is that the baby is unlikely to be exposed during pregnancy.

**Q15. Will I be able to stay with my baby / give skin-to-skin if I have suspected or confirmed coronavirus?**

Yes, if that is your choice. Provided your baby is well and doesn't require care in the neonatal unit, you will stay together after you have given birth.

A discussion about the risks and benefits should take place between you and your family and the doctors caring for your baby to individualise care for your baby.



This guidance may change as knowledge evolves.

**27.3.20**