

# Coronavirus and pregnancy

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**Congratulations on your pregnancy. You may be feeling unsure about how Coronavirus (COVID-19) could affect you, your baby and your pregnancy care. This leaflet summarises the risks of COVID-19 during pregnancy, the key advice to follow during pregnancy and what to do if you think you have symptoms of COVID-19.**

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## The risks of COVID-19 during pregnancy

For most women, COVID-19 infection during pregnancy will lead to a mild, flu-like illness - with no evidence that being pregnant makes women more likely to become infected. There is no evidence that pregnant women are more likely to contract COVID-19. However, recent studies have shown that both hospital admissions and severe illness are more common in pregnant women (compared to those not pregnant), particularly after 28 weeks' gestation. Women from Asian and Black ethnic groups as well as those with certain underlying medical conditions also have an increased chance of developing severe illness. Your midwife or obstetrician (pregnancy doctor) will discuss your individual risk with you and plan your care accordingly.

## Key advice during pregnancy

- The most effective way to protect yourself from the harms resulting from COVID-19 is to be vaccinated.
- The 'new variants' of COVID-19 are thought to be more infectious and to lead to more severe disease in pregnant women. For these reasons, you may want to take a more cautious approach to social distancing, face coverings and hand washing if you are mixing outside your household group. For up-to-date information go to <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/social-distancing/what-you-need-to-do/> or ask your community midwife.
- Wash your hands regularly and wear face coverings when you leave your home – ensure your mouth and nose are covered.
- Stay away from anyone who has symptoms of COVID-19.
- Stay active and hydrated to reduce the risk of blood clots.
- Eat a healthy diet; take folic acid and vitamin D supplements.
- Attend all of your antenatal appointments and scans unless you are required to stay at home in self-isolation due to symptoms of COVID-19, recent positive test for COVID-19, contact with a known COVID positive individual, or, due to travel quarantine restrictions.
  - *Speak to your midwife if you need to reschedule an appointment due to the reasons above.*
- Contact the Maternity Triage line 0118 322 7304 if you are worried about yourself or your unborn baby.
- If you have been advised that you are in a high-risk group and were advised to shield, **please ensure to let your community midwife know**. It is important to alert hospital staff of your increased risk if you are admitted to hospital.

- We recommend that you have your winter flu vaccine, unless there are good reasons not to; discuss these with your GP, midwife or obstetrician.

## **What to do if you think you have symptoms of COVID-19**

- If you think that your symptoms are mild and you can complete a sentence without pausing to breathe, please call the Maternity Triage line on **0118 322 7304**. The Triage midwife will arrange for a medical practitioner to call you back to assess your symptoms and decide with you if you need further assessment. Most people will be well enough to remain at home; in this circumstance, you will be contacted daily to ensure you are getting better.
- **If you feel breathless, please call 111 or 999.**

**It is important to seek medical advice as early as possible if you have any concerns about you or your unborn baby.**

## **Maternity appointments if you are self-isolating**

- Do not attend any maternity appointments or ultrasound scans if you need to remain at home in self-isolation due to symptoms of COVID-19, if you have tested positive or following overseas travel or if you are sharing a household with someone who is in quarantine due to travel.
- To re-arrange community midwife appointments, please call 0118 322 8059. If you are asked to leave a message, please do so and the community team will call you the following day.
- If you are due to attend hospital for a scan, please call 0118 322 7279. The team will advise if it is safe to delay your scan.

**Please note that overseas travel can affect your access to maternity or medical care, as you are required to quarantine on your return.**

## **Reducing the risk of COVID-19 in hospital**

We take every precaution to keep everyone safe, but, we need your help and support:

- We ask all pregnant women and their partners to take twice-weekly Lateral Flow Tests in pregnancy, and before face to face appointments
- We have reduced the number of people coming to hospital by offering virtual appointments, when appropriate
- We schedule appointments in a way to reduce the number of people in waiting rooms.
- Everyone is required to wear a face covering and follow strict hand hygiene.
- Beds and chairs are spaced to allow social distancing.
- One-way systems are in place.
- COVID-19 testing for all who are admitted to hospital, and isolation of those who test positive.

## COVID-19 test on admission to hospital

NHS England recommends that everyone who stays in hospital is tested for COVID-19:

- If you are attending hospital for a planned procedure, you will be sent a date to attend a testing station prior to your procedure.
- If your stay is unplanned or due to labour, a COVID-19 swab will be taken as part of the admission process.

Knowing the results of your COVID-19 test helps yourself and the maternity team to plan your care in order to keep you, your baby, your family and all around you safe. Research has found that not everyone who is carrying the virus feels unwell. **It is particularly important in the hospital environment that everyone takes every possible precaution to reduce the spread of the virus.**

## Birth partners

Having a support person present during labour is very important to most women. If your birthing partner has symptoms of COVID-19, has recently tested positive for COVID-19, or is required to self-isolate for other reasons (e.g. recent contact with an infected person), they will not be able to support you during labour or your stay in hospital. During your pregnancy, it may be helpful to plan who your 'backup' birthing partner would be, if needed.

## COVID-19 Vaccination in pregnancy and breastfeeding

The COVID-19 vaccination is safe and strongly recommended in pregnancy. This is because women and their unborn babies are considered at additional risks of significant complications from Covid. The decision whether to have the vaccination during pregnancy will be your choice. The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and The Royal Collage of Midwives have produced an information leaflet about the benefits and possible of risks of the vaccination (a link to these websites can be found at the end of this leaflet); these are summarised below:

- **Over 200,000 women have been safely given the Covid vaccine in pregnancy with no safety concerns**
- Receiving two doses of the vaccine is almost 100% effective at preventing admission to hospital with Covid for pregnant women. This is even more effective than in non-pregnant people.
- Covid causes stillbirth in 1 in 100 women who become unwell with it. Covid increases the risk of a baby being born prematurely by 3x. One in ten women with Covid in pregnancy need Intensive Care,
- The vaccines do not contain live Coronavirus or any ingredients that are harmful to pregnant women or their babies. Unlike some other medications, the vaccine cannot pass through the baby and affect their long-term development. The vaccine does not pass through breastmilk does produce protective antibodies against Covid infection for the baby when breastfeeding.

## Additional resources about COVID-19 and pregnancy

- Mum and Baby app
- Royal Collage of Midwives website ([www.rcm.org.uk](http://www.rcm.org.uk))
- Royal college of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists website ([www.rcog.org.uk](http://www.rcog.org.uk))
- Reading Maternity Voices Partnership ([www.readingmaternityvoices.org.uk/](http://www.readingmaternityvoices.org.uk/)) or ([www.facebook.com/ReadingMVP/](https://www.facebook.com/ReadingMVP/))
- NHS website: [www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/)
- Healthy eating and vitamin supplementation in pregnancy: <https://www.rcog.org.uk/globalassets/documents/patients/patient-information-leaflets/pregnancy/pi-healthy-eating-and-vitamin-supplements-in-pregnancy.pdf>
- Information leaflet about Useful resources: <https://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets/maternity---antenatal-resource-guide.htm>
- COVID-19 infant feeding resources: <https://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets/maternity-covid-19-and-infant-feeding-resources.htm>
- [www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/coronavirus](http://www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/coronavirus)
- Factsheet on use of Covid-19 vaccinations in breastfeeding and pregnancy: [www.hifn.org/covid-interim](http://www.hifn.org/covid-interim)
- COVID-19 and pregnancy care FAQ: <https://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets/maternity-covid-19-faq.htm>
- Coronavirus: Planning your birth: <https://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets/maternity-covid-19-planning-your-birth.htm>
- Coronavirus: Parent information for newborn babies: <https://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets/maternity-covid-19-info-for-parents-of-newborns.htm>

## Contact numbers and queries

If you have any queries or need to contact us, please use the number below

- Maternity Triage: 0118 322 7304
- Maternity Call Centre: 0118 322 8964 (select option 1)
- Community Midwives office: 0118 322 8059
- Maternity Ultrasound: 0118 322 7279

To find out more about our Trust visit [www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk](http://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk)

**Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.**

S Fleming, Consultant MW (Maternity), February 2021

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