

Plan for baby of mom with COVID-19 concerns

Our goal is to keep your baby safe and healthy. These recommendations reduce the chance that your baby would become sick from this virus. Please help us by following these recommendations.

Plan for the Delivery:

So far, most babies who do get sick with COVID-19 get it after birth and not during the pregnancy. You should wear a mask to decrease spread of the virus. All the people caring for you and your baby will be wearing protective equipment. You should wear a mask whenever someone else is in your room.

Newborn care:

You and your doctors will develop a plan on where your infant will be after birth. This will be based on your health, your test results, how you plan to feed your infant, and the ability to maintain separation after going home. If you and your doctors decide that the best pathway for you and your baby is to keep your baby in your room with you while you are in the hospital, steps will be taken to help decrease the risk of spread to your baby. The baby should stay at least 6 feet away from you at all times except when you are caring for the baby or feeding the baby. Barriers like a curtain or a screen may be used to help protect the spread of the virus. You should wear a facemask at all times and wash your hands well before touching the baby. If you and your care provider may decide that it's safest for you and your baby to be separated while you are in the hospital and at home to decrease the risk of spread of the virus to the baby. After delivery, your baby may be taken to a separate area until going home. You should identify a healthy family member (preferably someone who was not exposed to you) who can care for your baby while you are separated. That caregiver should limit their movement back and forth between your room and the baby's room, if you are separated.

Can I breastfeed?

Breastmilk provides protection against many illnesses and is the best feeding choice for most infants. If you directly breastfeed, you must wear a mask and wash your hands before you feed your baby. If you have a cough, you should also wash your breasts with soap and water before you feed your baby. If you are separated from your baby, you should pump your breastmilk, and it will be given to your baby. You must wash your hands and the breast pump parts very well and you should wear a mask while pumping. Washing your breasts before pumping would be a good idea too if you have a cough. Your breastmilk should not contain the virus, but the virus can be on objects and surfaces, which is why washing is so important.

Communication:

If you are separated from your baby, the nurses and doctors will give you frequent updates about your baby. We will try to use phone video or other ways of video to help you see your baby throughout the stay. Your baby's doctor will probably talk to you by phone. Please feel free to ask any questions to your doctor.

When is baby ready to go home?

If your baby is doing well, he/she can usually go home after 36-48 hours of age. Hopefully, you will be feeling well enough to go home too. If you have to stay in the hospital longer and a healthy caregiver is available, your baby could go home with them.

Follow up:

Your baby should have an appointment with the pediatrician within a few days after going home from the hospital. Please tell the pediatrician's office about the concerns for COVID-19, so they can be prepared for your visit. Once your appointment is made, the doctor taking care of your baby at the hospital will call your infant's primary care doctor to give an update of the hospital stay.

What if my baby is in the NICU or Special Care Nursery?

Once it is safe, you will be able to visit your baby in the NICU or special care nursery. Until then, you will not be able to visit the baby. In order to keep the youngest and most fragile babies from getting sick from the virus, no one who has been exposed to COVID-19 or suspected to have COVID-19 will be allowed in the NICU. If you are not able to visit, we will work on ways to keep you involved in the care of your baby, using photos or video if possible. You should also continue to pump breast milk so we can give it to your baby.

After going home from the hospital:

When can I stop separating from my baby?

We know that the virus can be shed by someone who has the virus for weeks. If you were separated from your baby in the hospital, we suggest that your baby is kept in a different room from you while you are sick and getting better. You should use a separate bathroom, if possible. Please continue the very best hand washing and cleaning of your home, especially frequently touched surfaces.

The CDC recommends that you and your baby should stay apart until:

1. You feel well, and
2. You have not had a fever (without taking medications) for at least 72 hours (3 full days), and at least 7 days have passed since your symptoms started, or if you didn't have any symptoms, 7 days from your first positive test
3. When testing is more available, you may be able to stop separating after you have 2 negative tests at least 1 day apart

If you and your baby were in the same room in the hospital, you should stay at least 6 feet away from your baby and wear a mask around your baby for the same amount of time as listed above. If you never had any symptoms, you should continue these steps for at least 10 days from your first positive test.

Breastfeeding:

You should continue to wear a mask and wash your hands before you breast feed your baby. If you are pumping your breastmilk for your baby, you will need a breast pump when you go home from the hospital so you can continue to get breastmilk for the baby. Once your illness is over, you will be able to breastfeed directly. You should continue to wear a mask and wash your hands and breasts well before feeding your baby. Because your illness may have delayed direct breastfeeding, follow-up about breastfeeding is important. Your hospital or pediatrician may have a phone number you call for help. You can also call The Ohio Department of Health Breastfeeding Hotline, available 24/7: 1-888-588-3423.

When should I take my baby to the doctor?

You should have an appointment a few days after going home from the hospital. If your baby develops: fever, problems with breathing, problems feeding, jaundice, or poor coloring, call your baby's doctor right away for further instructions. If you are very concerned about your baby's health, call 911.

If your baby needs to come back to the hospital: The birth hospital would be a good choice if the reasons for admission are not related to COVID-19 and there are no breathing problems. The most common causes of readmission to the hospital for newborns are feeding issues and jaundice. If your baby has a fever, cough, or trouble breathing, the baby would need to go to the Children's Hospital.

References

1. AAP publication 3/17/2020, Wong et al
2. CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/>
3. AAP: Management of Infants Born to Mothers with COVID-19 Date of Document: April 2, 2020