

# Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for the Perinatal and Infant Populations, provided by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE)

April 3, 2020

This frequently asked questions document is based on what is currently known about the spread and severity of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). Please check the [KDHE website](#) periodically for updated information and guidance.

This document is intended for pregnant women, mothers, and individuals serving pregnant and postpartum mothers and infants.

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## **Q. Are pregnant women at greater risk of contracting COVID-19? Updated 4/3/20**

A. There is very little information at this stage, so we do not currently know if pregnant women are at greater risk of getting COVID-19. We do know that pregnant women experience changes in their bodies that may increase their risk for contracting some infections. We also know that pregnant women have had a higher risk of developing severe illness with viruses from the same family as COVID-19 and other viral respiratory infections such as influenza. Therefore, it is important for pregnant women to take extra precautions to protect themselves from illness and talk with their doctor.

## **Q. Can COVID-19 cause problems for a pregnancy or be passed on to the unborn baby? Updated 4/3/20**

A. There is not enough information, research, or literature to definitively answer the question as to whether COVID-19 can cause problems during pregnancy. We also do not know if a pregnant woman with COVID-19 can pass the virus to her baby during pregnancy or delivery. There have been a very small number of newborns who have tested positive after being born to a mother with COVID-19, but due to an extremely small number of cases, studies still have not determined when the newborn became infected with the virus. It is unclear if it occurred in the womb, during the birthing process, or immediately after birth. The virus has not been found in samples of amniotic fluid, umbilical cord blood or breastmilk. It is critical that appropriate precautions are taken after delivery to prevent the spread of the virus from the mother to the infant. At this time, experts say there is no need to change the timing or method (cesarean vs. vaginal) of delivery to decrease the risk of spread to the infant. Overall, babies seem to do fairly well, with mild symptoms and good outcomes. In the rare case of infant death, it has not been determined if it was due to the virus or other underlying (original, or already existing) conditions.

**Q. Is it safe to breastfeed my baby?**

A. Much is still unknown about how COVID-19 is spread. In limited studies on women with COVID-19 and another coronavirus infection, the virus has not been detected in breastmilk. Breastmilk provides protection against many illnesses. Person-to-person spread is thought to occur mainly via respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes; therefore, precautions should be taken to prevent transmission during the process of breastfeeding and handling of breastmilk. For more information please review resources about [COVID-19 and breastfeeding](#) provided by the Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition. It is important to talk with your doctor or a breastfeeding support professional because there are rare exceptions when breastfeeding or feeding expressed breast milk is not recommended.

**Q. How can I protect myself and my family from contracting COVID-19?**

**Updated 4/3/20**

- A. Follow the below guidance to prevent the spread.
- Frequently wash hands with warm, soapy water for at least 20 seconds.
  - Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer when handwashing is unavailable.
  - Clean commonly used surfaces (e.g., countertops, tables, doorknobs) regularly with disinfectant (pregnant women should wear gloves or use green products with disinfectant agent, or ideally have another household member clean the surface when possible).
  - Avoid contact with sick people.
  - Cover your coughs (coughing into your elbow).
  - If you or your family has not yet received vaccines for Influenza, get vaccinated now.
  - Practice social distancing and staying at home:
    - Only go out for essential items.
    - Avoid gathering in groups (10 people or less).
    - Keep distance of 6 feet, if you must go out.

**Q. When should I contact my medical provider?**

A. Symptoms of pregnancy and postpartum related complications should always be communicated to your provider immediately. See this [video](#) on the importance of staying in communication with your provider regarding concerns with your baby's well-being during pregnancy. Related to COVID-19 concerns, call right away if you experience a fever of 100.4 or greater, cough, shortness of breath, or difficulty breathing.

**Q. Should I still go to my prenatal and postpartum appointments?**

A. Continuing to see your provider throughout your pregnancy and in the postpartum period is the number one way to ensure that both you and your baby are healthy and doing well. Some providers may choose alternative options for routine check-ups for low-risk patients, such as altering the frequency or method of appointments (for

example, offering appointments virtually via telehealth). Make sure that your contact information, including phone number and email, are always up-to-date with your healthcare providers so these changes can be communicated to you timely and easily.

**Q. How will this outbreak affect my delivery experience?**

A. It's hard to predict how the COVID-19 pandemic will impact your labor and delivery experience, but be prepared for possible changes, such as shorter hospital stays and limitations on visitors and/or support persons. Although this may cause feelings of being anxious or scared, you can be reassured that there will be continuous support from a labor nurse. Your doctor and local birth center can keep you up-to-date on changes to normal procedures. Although the COVID-19 pandemic may change the labor and birth experience you planned for, it will continue to be special and memorable in so many ways.

**Q. If I have Medicaid or KanCare coverage for my pregnancy, how will it be affected by this pandemic? New 4/3/20**

A. As a KanCare beneficiary during your pregnancy, your coverage will extend beyond the typical coverage period of 60-days postpartum, until the end of the month in which the COVID-19 emergency period ends. Make sure that your contact information, including phone number and email, are always up-to-date with your KanCare provider so any changes in your benefits can be communicated to you easily.

**Q. How can I keep my newborn safe? Updated 4/3/20**

A. Good hygiene (handwashing) and social distancing are the most effective ways to keep your infant safe from communicable diseases such as COVID-19. Continuing to follow all public health recommendations, lining up a symptom-free support person to help drop off supplies, and connecting with friends and family virtually (phone, text, FaceTime, social media) will limit the exposure of the virus/disease to you and your family.

Ways to keep your children safe:

- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer when handwashing is unavailable.
- Reduce close contact with others by practicing social.
- Keep your children away from others who are sick and keep them home if they are sick.
- Teach kids to cough and sneeze into a tissue or their arm or elbow, not their hands.
- Clean commonly used surfaces regularly with disinfectant. Clean commonly touched surfaces (e.g., countertops, tables, doorknobs) regularly with disinfectant.

- Wash stuffed animals or other plush toys in the warmest water possible, being sure to dry them completely.
- Teach children to avoid touching face.
- Follow local and state guidance on travel and stay-at-home restrictions.

**Q. Should I take my baby/child to his/her regularly scheduled well-child appointments? Updated 4/3/20**

A. Yes. It is important to continue with regularly scheduled pediatric appointments and to continue with vaccinations as scheduled. These efforts will help protect your baby/child from other illnesses and will assure your baby/child grows and develops properly. Some providers may choose alternative options for routine check-ups for low-risk patients, such as altering the frequency or method of appointments (for example, offering appointments virtually via telehealth). Make sure that your contact information, including phone number and email, are always up-to-date with your healthcare providers so these changes can be communicated to you timely and easily.

**Q. What symptoms should I be watching for in my baby? Updated 4/3/20**

A. Monitor for fever and call your baby's provider if he/she has a fever of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher, even if there are no other symptoms. Other symptoms to be aware and to report to your provider include:

- How well is your baby feeding?
- How alert is your baby?
- How many wet diapers is your baby having?
- How hard is your baby working at breathing?
- Have you noticed any discoloration of your baby's lips?

**Q. Should I continue to receive other health and support services?**

A. Because the prenatal and postpartum periods are a very vulnerable time in families' lives, it is important to stay connected with support services in your community. Most resources and support services, such as WIC, home visiting and mental health services, continue to be available. These services may be offered through alternative methods, such as telephonic or virtual options; therefore, it is important to stay informed through local communication (e.g., contacting the service provider/agency, visiting their website, social media, local newspapers, and radio stations) and keeping your contact information up-to-date with all service providers.

**Additional Information and Resources:**

- Information on [COVID-19 during Pregnancy and Breastfeeding](#) by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC)

- Clinical Guidance on COVID-19 by the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG)
- COVID-19 Resource Center provided by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE)
- Handout on Handwashing by CDC
- Managing Anxiety and Stress related to COVID-19 by CDC
- Taking Care of Your Emotional Health during an Emergency by CDC
- Tips for Social Distancing, Quarantine, and Isolation during an Infectious Disease Outbreak - includes Helpful Resources and Hotlines – by SAMHSA