

# Patient Education

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## **COVID-19 and Pregnancy Discharge Instructions**

You must carefully read the "Consumer Information Use and Disclaimer" below in order to understand and correctly use this information

### **About this topic**

Coronavirus disease 2019 is also known as COVID-19. It is caused by a virus called SARS-associated coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2). Doctors are still studying how COVID-19 affects pregnancy. They believe it may be possible to pass COVID to your baby while you are still pregnant, during childbirth, or after the baby is born. You may be at a higher risk for having your baby early. Babies who are born early can have serious health problems.

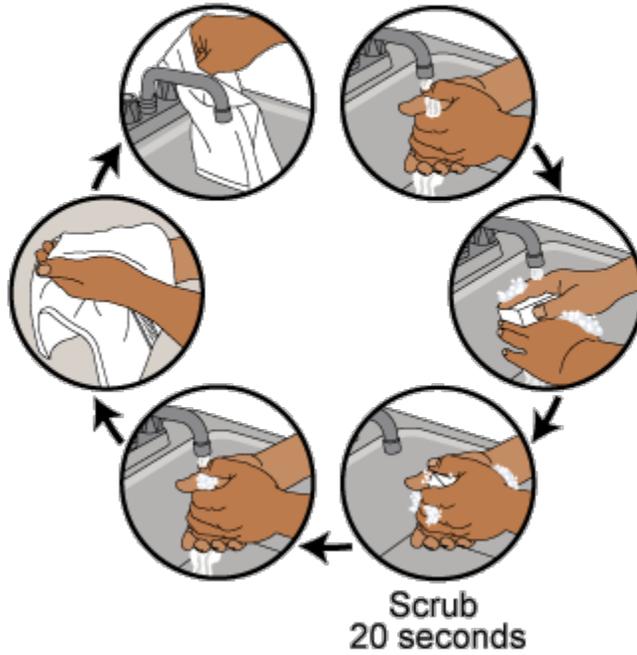
The signs of COVID-19 most often start 4 to 5 days after you have been infected. In some people, it can take up to 2 weeks to show signs. Others may never show signs of the infection. You may have a cough, fever, shaking chills, and it may be hard to breathe. You may be very tired, have muscle aches, a headache, or sore throat. Some people have an upset stomach or loose stools. Others lose their sense of smell or taste. You may not have these signs all the time and they may come and go while you are sick.

The virus spreads easily through droplets when you talk, sneeze, or cough. You can pass the virus to others when you are talking close together, singing, hugging, sharing food, or shaking hands. Doctors believe the germs also survive on surfaces like tables, door handles, and telephones. However, this is not a common way that COVID-19 spreads. You can also spread the infection even if you don't have any symptoms. This is why getting a vaccine is one of the best ways to slow the spread of the virus. People age 12 and older should also get a booster shot to give them extra protection.

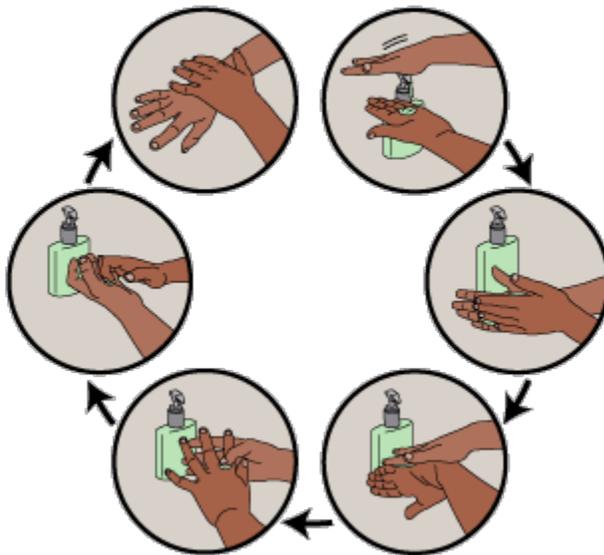
Some people have a mild case of COVID-19 and are able to stay at home until they feel better. Your doctor may watch you more closely if you are sick and pregnant. Some people may need to be in the hospital if they are very sick. People with COVID-19 must isolate themselves. You can start to be around others when your doctor says it is safe to do so.

### **Image(s)**

## Hand Washing



## Hand Sanitizing



### What care is needed at home?

- Ask your doctor what you need to do when you go home. Make sure you ask questions if you do not understand what the doctor says.

- Staff may ask you to wear a mask over your mouth and nose when you are in labor. You may also need to wear a mask when you hold your baby. If you are sick with COVID-19, you may not be able to hold or be around your baby until you are feeling better.
- Drink lots of water, juice, or broth to replace fluids lost from a fever.
- You may use cool mist humidifiers to help ease congestion and coughing.
- Use 2 to 3 pillows to prop yourself up when you lie down to make it easier to breathe and sleep.
- Do not smoke and do not drink beer, wine, and mixed drinks (alcohol).
- If you have not had the COVID-19 vaccine and booster, get one after your infection has resolved. This will help lower the chance of passing the infection to others.
- To lower the chance of passing the infection to others:
  - Stay home while you recover. Only go out if you need to get medical care.
  - At home, try to stay in a separate room, away from other people and animals. This is called "self-isolation." Use a separate bathroom if possible.
  - Wear a mask over your mouth and nose if you are around others who are not sick. Respirator masks like N95 and KN95 can filter out even very tiny air particles. Whatever type of mask you use, it's important that it fit snugly over your face with no gaps. You can improve the fit by using a mask with an adjustable nose wire, adjusting or knotting the ear loops to make it tighter, or wearing a cloth mask on top of a disposable mask. If other people have to be in the same room or vehicle with you, they should wear a mask also.
  - After your baby is born, wear a mask over your mouth and nose when you feed or hold your baby or pump breast milk for your baby.
  - Wash your hands often. Avoid touching your face, especially the mouth, nose, and eyes. Avoid these same areas on your baby.
  - Do not make food for others.
- Continue to self-isolate until your doctor or nurse tells you it's OK to return to your normal activities. When you can stop self-isolation will depend on how long it has been since you had symptoms, and in some cases, whether you have had a negative test (showing that the virus is no longer in your body).

#### **What follow-up care is needed?**

- Your doctor may ask you to make visits to the office to check on your progress. Be sure to keep these visits. Make sure you wear a mask at these visits.
- If you can, tell the staff you have COVID-19 ahead of time so they can take extra care to stop the disease from spreading.
- It may take a few weeks before your health returns to normal.

### **What drugs may be needed?**

The doctor may order drugs to:

- Help with fever

### **Will physical activity be limited?**

You may have to limit your physical activity. Talk to your doctor about the right amount of activity for you. If you have been very sick with COVID-19, it can take some time to get your strength back.

### **Will there be any other care needed?**

Doctors do not know how long you can pass the virus on to others after you are sick. Experts believe there is only a very small chance of passing along the virus to your baby in your breast milk. You may want to have a healthy adult help with feeding your baby. If not, take extra care with good handwashing and wear a mask. Avoid touching your face, mouth, or eyes and avoid touching your baby's face, mouth, or eyes as well.

For now, doctors are giving general guidelines for you to follow after you have been sick. Before you go around other people, you should:

- Be fever free for 3 days without taking any drugs to lower your fever
- Have no symptoms of cough or shortness of breath
- Wait at least 10 days after you first have symptoms or your first positive test, and you also need to be symptom-free as above. Some experts suggest waiting 14 days.

Talk with your doctor about getting a COVID-19 vaccine or booster.

### **What problems could happen?**

- Fluid loss. This is dehydration.
- Short-term or long-term lung damage
- Heart problems
- Death

### **When do I need to call the doctor?**

- Signs of infection. These include a fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher, chills, cough, more sputum, or change in color of sputum.
- You are having so much trouble breathing that you can only say one or two words at a time.
- You need to sit upright at all times to be able to breathe and or cannot lie down.
- You have trouble breathing when talking or sitting still.
- You have very dark urine or do not urinate for more than 8 hours.
- Your baby moves less than usual or stops moving.

- Signs of a dangerous condition called "preeclampsia," such as a headache that is very bad or doesn't go away, changes in vision, or pain in the upper belly.

### **Teach Back: Helping You Understand**

The Teach Back Method helps you understand the information we are giving you. After you talk with the staff, tell them in your own words what you learned. This helps to make sure the staff has described each thing clearly. It also helps to explain things that may have been confusing. Before going home, make sure you can do these:

- I can tell you about my condition.
- I can tell you what may help ease my breathing.
- I can tell you what I can do to help avoid passing the infection to my baby and others.
- I can tell you what I will do if I have trouble breathing, my baby moves less, or my urine is very dark in color.

### **Where can I learn more?**

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

<https://www.acog.org/patient-resources/faqs/pregnancy/coronavirus-pregnancy-and-breastfeeding#How%20does%20COVID19%20affect%20pregnant%20women>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/disposition-in-home-patients.html>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/pregnancy-breastfeeding.html>

World Health Organization

<https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-on-covid-19-and-pregnancy-and-childbirth>

### **Last Reviewed Date**

2022-02-04

### **Consumer Information Use and Disclaimer:**

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