

Discharge information for new parent recovering from COVID-19

As a new parent who has been diagnosed as having COVID-19 or novel Coronavirus 2019, we want to give you some special reminders regarding your care and the care of your baby.

As you know, COVID-19 is a respiratory illness that causes fever, cough, chills, fatigue, and, in some cases, pneumonia and difficulty breathing requiring hospitalization. Your immune system is suppressed during your pregnancy and postpartum period to help the developing pregnancy, and that may cause you to be more susceptible to the more severe symptoms of COVID-19. Complete resolution of symptoms can take more than two weeks after they begin.

Take care of yourself

Please hydrate (water, diluted juices, Pedialyte, Gatorade etc.), rest, and eat healthfully during this time.

When to call us

It is very important that you contact your OB/GYN office immediately if your fever returns, you have increasing shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, chest pain, dizziness, confusion, lightheadedness, or other worsening of symptoms.

If you need to be seen

Call your healthcare provider **before** seeking care and tell them that you have, or are being evaluated for, COVID-19. The number to call to schedule a UI Health Care video visit is 319-384-9010.

If you are directed to come to the hospital or doctor's office, put on a facemask before entering the building. These steps will help the healthcare provider's office to keep other people in the office or waiting room safe.

When you get home

It is important that you isolate at home during your illness. We recommend that **you only leave your home to seek medical care.**

- If possible, you should stay in a specific room and use a separate bathroom from others in the house.
- We do not recommend bed rest –it is important that you get up and move around to help prevent blood clots in your legs.
- We do not recommend that you go to work, school, or public areas. You should avoid public transportation, ride sharing, or taxis if possible.
- We also recommend that if you must be around others that you wear a face mask.
- Make sure to wash your hands frequently with soap and water or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Encourage your family to do the same.
- Do your best to not share any household items with your family.

Other guidance for how to help at home is here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-prevent-spread.html>

How will this affect your baby?

If you have COVID-19 around the time of delivery, it is possible that your baby may also be infected with the virus. We don't have a lot of information about babies and children who are infected with COVID-19 but so far infants who are infected around the time of birth have done very well. In fact, infants usually handle this virus much better than adults. It's very common for new parents to have a lot of questions about how this virus will impact the care of their new baby. We've put together these recommendations for you based on information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the experience of doctors who take care of newborns in areas of the world where COVID-19 has already been circulating.

Avoiding COVID-19 virus spread

People get COVID-19 by being in very close contact with an infected person. Examples include being sneezed or coughed on by someone who is sick with COVID-19, living in the same house as someone with COVID-19, or spending a long time within 6 feet of an infected person. Some infants get COVID-19 from their mothers during delivery but many do not. As far as we know, COVID-19 is not in breastmilk. However, the close contact between mother and baby during cuddling, breastfeeding, changing diapers, etc. does put the baby at high risk of infection. This risk is why we recommend that you try to be separated from your baby while you are ill, even though we understand that is a difficult request.

Caring for your baby at home

If a mother has COVID-19 and is still sick with it when she and her baby are ready to go home, some special care planning is needed:

- It is always important that anyone who cares for a newborn baby wash their hands when they enter the house and again before touching the infant.
- Only people who are absolutely essential for the care of the mother or baby is sick should be present.
- Whenever possible, a healthy person should provide all the direct care for the infant at home.
- The baby and the mother should do their best to stay at least 6 feet apart. When it is not possible for a mother to stay separated from the baby, she should very carefully wash her hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and if possible, put on a facemask before caring for the baby.

When the mother is feeling better and no longer has fever, she should discuss with her pediatrician and/or obstetrician about when it is safe to stop the separation of mother and baby.

Breastfeeding / Formula feeding

We support all forms of infant nutrition.

Breastfeeding: If you are able to breastfeed, this is believed to be the best nutrition for a newborn. We do not believe at this time that the virus can be transmitted through breastmilk, but we are concerned that the infected mother could transmit the virus to the baby when they are in close contact during nursing. Therefore, we strongly suggest that mothers use a breast pump to express milk and have a healthy caregiver feed the milk to the infant.

The person who feeds the baby should be wearing clean clothing and wash their hands for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer prior to feeding the infant. The mother should thoroughly wash her hands before pumping and sterilize the pump parts after each pumping based on the manufacturer recommendations. After pumping, the mother should pass the sealed milk container to the healthy caregiver who is taking care of the baby. That person should wipe down the container with a disinfecting wipe or wash the container with soap and water. Be sure that any disinfectant or soap is rinsed off of the container. The milk can then be fed to the infant or stored in the refrigerator or frozen.

Formula: If you are formula feeding, we recommend that someone else make formula and feed the baby until the period of separation has ended, if possible. Please encourage all caregivers of the baby to wash hands frequently and seek care immediately if they become ill.

If your baby is infected with the COVID-19 virus

If your baby does become infected with the virus, the baby's symptoms will most likely be mild. You may notice a stuffy nose or sneezing or coughing more often. If the baby develops trouble breathing or a fever higher than 38.0 degrees Celsius or 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit, you should call the baby's doctor right away.

Make sure you let the doctor know that the baby's mother has COVID-19.

Your baby's doctor visits

If you need to take your baby to the doctor's office for a check-up or for any other concern, it is very important to let the doctor's office know that the mother has COVID-19.

If possible, a healthy caregiver should take the baby to the doctor and the mother should stay at home.

The doctor's office may ask that the adult who is with the baby wear a mask and/or that the baby's car seat/carrier be covered loosely with a clean sheet or blanket. If they request that, it is important that this be done as you enter the doctor's office.

It's important to coordinate visits to the doctor carefully with the doctor's office personnel.

If you have questions

Don't hesitate to call your doctor's office if you have any questions or concerns.