

Frequently Asked Questions about COVID-19 for Pregnant Families in the Comox Valley Last Updated: June 4, 2020

General COVID-19 information

- Incubation of COVID-19 is 1-14 days but mostly 3-7 days (average 5 days)
- Most will get a mild respiratory illness. Symptoms include: fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat and painful swallowing, stuffy or runny nose, loss of sense of smell, headache, muscle aches, fatigue, loss of appetite. May also experience gastrointestinal symptoms like diarrhea, nausea and vomiting a few days after the onset of the above symptoms.

If you have been asked to self-isolate due to contact with someone with COVID-19, or have the illness, contact your care provider

Local Comox Valley COVID-19 Updates

- Before you call us with general questions about COVID-19, please check our [Island Health Local Update](#) which may answer your questions and do the [COVID-19 Symptom Self Assessment](#)

Pregnancy

FREQUENCY OF CLINIC APPOINTMENTS

- Your maternity care provider may have changed the schedule of your clinic appointments for your pregnancy and post partum. Your visits may be less frequent than usual however we will ensure you and your baby are seen as often as needed to keep you safe and to give you quality care.
- Some visits may be conducted by phone or video to limit face to face visits. Please ask your care provider for more details.

****IMPORTANT: WE NEED YOUR CURRENT CONTACT INFORMATION**
PLEASE ENSURE WE HAVE YOUR PREFERRED PHONE NUMBER**

RISKS TO PREGNANT PATIENTS AND BABIES

- Pregnant patients are NOT more susceptible to contracting COVID.
- Less than 20% of pregnant women that do contract COVID will develop severe symptoms. Most pregnant people that contract COVID will experience mild to moderate symptoms.
- Currently, there is no evidence of birth defects caused by COVID in the first trimester but we have limited information.
- Currently there is no evidence that a pregnant patient with COVID can pass it on to her baby while pregnant (vertical transmission).

WHAT IF I GET COVID DURING PREGNANCY?

- At this point in time we know that if you were to get COVID during pregnancy there is a very good chance that you will fully recover. Most people recover fine at home, and you should not require hospitalization just because you are pregnant with COVID.
- Pregnant patients with mild COVID should stay at home in self isolation whenever possible.
- Pregnant people should be advised NOT to come to hospital unless they are in need of urgent obstetric or medical care.

Pregnant women with symptoms should self isolate at home, but please inform your care provider if you think you may have COVID so we can ensure you have appropriate followup care. We may recommend extra ultrasound(s) to monitor baby's growth.

I HAVE COLD SYMPTOMS. WHAT SHOULD I DO?

- Stay home! Most people with COVID will not need medical attention and can safely stay at home with their symptoms. This prevents the spread of your illness.
- If you are unsure whether your symptoms warrant medical attention please check out the [COVID-19 Symptom Self Assessment](#)
- If you still have questions after this call your care provider.

DO I NEED A NOTE TO BE OFF WORK BECAUSE OF MY COLD?

- Your employer should not require a note based on current BC recommendations at this time. If you are experiencing difficulties with your employer and feel you need a letter please let your care provider know.

IS IT COVID? SHOULD I BE TESTED?

- The BC Government has changed the COVID testing strategy to adapt to the slower rate of cases in our province. To learn more visit the [BC CDC COVID testing website](#)
- In our community, you can book an appointment through your care provider or call Island Health Call Centre at 1-844-901-8442.

WHEN DO I NEED TO SELF ISOLATE?

- If you have **ANY** respiratory symptoms, would need to self isolate for 10 days.
- If you have been travelling outside of Canada, then you need to self isolate for 14 days.
- If someone in your household is sick with respiratory symptoms, try to isolate from them as much as possible.
- Learn more about how to self isolate here [BC CDC Self isolation dos and don'ts](#)

Pregnancy

WILL I STILL HAVE MY ULTRASOUND APPOINTMENTS?

- Currently, all obstetrical appointments are still happening as they are considered essential.
- However, we are actively reviewing everyone's situation as we go to make sure no one receives an ultrasound that is not necessary. If you are worried about this please let us know so we can review if any changes are needed.

WILL I STILL HAVE MY IRON INFUSION?

- At this time iron infusions are happening if they are really needed.

I AM WORRIED ABOUT COMING TO THE CLINIC FOR MY REGULAR APPOINTMENTS. IS THIS NECESSARY FOR CARE?

- We are actively making changes to how patients are seen according to new guidelines that are coming out. We will strive to make sure you are coming into our clinics as little as possible while still providing safe care for you and your baby.
- Much of your care can be safely provided by telephone or telehealth. We will always see you in person if we feel this is important for the health of you and the baby.
- We are actively cleaning our clinic throughout the day and after each patient visit to make sure the clinic remains as safe as possible. This virus does not spread in the air unless someone is actively coughing. Close attention to washing out hands goes a long way. We are avoiding having patients with cough symptoms in our clinic.

WHAT IF MY DOCTOR, NURSE OR MIDWIFE HAS COVID?

- No healthcare professional will be working with ANY cold symptoms. If they have symptoms, they will be tested for COVID.
- In the event that your health care provider is sick or quarantined and there isn't another provider available within the group, you may receive care from an alternative midwife, family physician, or obstetrician.

Labour & Delivery

WHAT IF I HAVE COLD SYMPTOMS DURING MY DELIVERY?

- If you are actively sick with cold symptoms at the time of delivery, or any time in your pregnancy, we will be able to care for you. Expect staff to be wearing protective equipment, but otherwise we will strive to take the same excellent care of you and your baby.
- We will likely recommend monitoring your baby more closely during labour with electronic fetal monitoring (EFM), due to a small increased risk of fetal distress when moms have COVID in labour.
- If you go into labour and you have symptoms of a cold or respiratory illness, we would immediately do a swab. The team caring for you would continue to wear protective equipment until this swab result was back and we know for sure whether you have a simple cold to COVID.

CAN I HAVE MY FAMILY AT THE LABOUR?

- At this time you may only have one labour support person. This is an Island Health policy and similar across the province. When the risk of COVID is deemed high, visitor restrictions are essential for protecting everyone. This will be re-evaluated regularly and adjusted as the risk changes.

CAN I GET ENTONOX FOR PAIN MANAGEMENT DURING LABOUR?

- Unfortunately at this time, entonox (laughing gas) is not available for ANYONE (whether you have cold symptoms or not) in all Island Health facilities, due to the risk of the virus particles being spread in the air by people who may not realize they have the virus. This is for the protection of all healthcare workers, as well as yourself and family.

ARE EARLY EPIDURALS NOW STRONGLY RECOMMENDED?

- If you have suspected or confirmed COVID, our anesthetists (expert doctors who place epidurals, etc) are encouraging early epidurals for labour pain relief in order to reduce the risk of giving a general anesthetic (GA) for emergency cesarean section. GA allows for the highest risk of transmission of the virus. Of course, the final decision to have an epidural or not rests with you.

If you want more information from the 3 leading organizations for Obstetrics and Gynecology, see the newly published COVID practice advisories below:

[The Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada](#)

[The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists](#)

[The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists](#)

We acknowledge that our clinics operate on the traditional, unceded territory of the K'ómoks First Nation.

Postpartum

WHO CAN VISIT AT THE HOSPITAL AFTER MY BABY IS BORN?

- At this time there are NO visitors allowed in the hospital. You may have one support person with you per day, preferably the same person each day, to limit flow through the hospital. When the risk of COVID is deemed high, visitor restrictions are essential for protecting everyone. This will be re-evaluated regularly and adjusted as the risk changes.

WHO CAN VISIT AFTER MY BABY IS BORN AND WE ARE AT HOME?

- We highly recommend creating a “cocoon” and limiting visitors as much as possible to only key supports. However, we recognize having a newborn baby at home can be stressful, and only you can decide what the right balance is for you.
- We would suggest the general principles of social distancing as much as possible. Consider using video chatting and phone to stay in touch.

IF YOU ARE GOING TO HAVE VISITORS:

- excellent hand-hygiene for all visitors.
- minimal number of visitors (particularly at one time).
- ABSOLUTELY no visitors with any respiratory symptoms or sick contacts.
- No visitors who have been travelling outside of Canada within the last 14 days.
- It's unclear whether the risk of travelling across provinces exists within Canada as well, but we do know at this time there are certain areas in Canada that have higher rates of COVID than others, and this may increase your risk of exposure.

CAN I BREASTFEED IF I GET COVID?

- Breastfeeding with COVID is encouraged because the protective effect of breastfeeding is particularly strong against infectious diseases through directly transferring antibodies and other important immune factors to the baby.

WILL I BE SEPARATED FROM MY BABY IF I GET COVID?

- Guidelines at this time do not recommend separating mom and baby at delivery if mom has COVID. We would recommend good hand washing and using a mask if you have proven COVID.
- We would still recommend practices such as skin to skin contact (with mom wearing mask and after having washed hands).
- If mom is COVID positive, the baby may be tested for COVID. The baby would only be separated or isolated if mom or baby was extremely unwell and required specialized care

Helpful Links

[Anxiety Canada](#)

[Calm - Take a deep breath](#)

[Talking to your kids about coronavirus and social distancing](#)

[I visited 18 countries today - how about you?](#)

[20 things to do at home instead of banging your head against a wall](#)

Helpful Links for kids

[Pluto the Dog's Message to Kids!](#)

[Children stuck at home can still explore the zoo or aquarium. Some penguins could, too](#)

Stay healthy and safe, your Comox Valley maternity care providers.

If you are experiencing an emergency, such as problems breathing, please call 911. If you have health concerns, you can call your primary care provider, or HealthLink BC at 811