

COVID-19 INFO FOR NEW PARENTS

We know you are concerned about the novel coronavirus / COVID-19 and your newborn. It is reassuring that the data so far has suggested that pregnant women and children are not more likely to get coronavirus or to develop a more severe disease than the rest of the population. However, there is some evidence that newborns who become infected could get seriously sick. The smartest thing to do is protect your precious new family member as best you can.

Wash your hands frequently, with soap and water for 20 seconds (contact with soap). Pay particular attention to washing your hands after touching your face, coughing or sneezing, before eating or handling of food, before breastfeeding, after using the washroom, after changing a diaper, or immediately after coming into the house from somewhere else.

Stay home – Use this time to get to know your new baby at home. Limit the amount of times you leave your home and reserve those times for important medical appointments. Consider asking your supports to pick up your groceries or consider grocery delivery. It is ok to take your new baby out for a walk, as long as you can maintain at least 2 m between you and other people who do not live with you.

Limit visitors – Your friends and family will be excited to meet your new baby and you will be excited to show your infant off. But at this time it is important to defer visitors in order to reduce the spread of Coronavirus. If you decide to allow visitors, please ensure they are well and have self-isolated for at least 14 days from the public. Make them wash their hands when they arrive and turn them away even if they have mild symptoms. The fewer people that hold your baby right now, the better, and don't let visitors kiss your baby. Please cancel your baby showers!

Older children – young children are often carriers of viral illnesses, Coronavirus included. Fortunately, young children don't usually get very sick from COVID-19 but they can easily spread it. At this time, schools and daycares are closed, but consider keeping your children at home with you so they have less of a chance to bring Coronavirus into your home. Avoid playgroups, gatherings, and playgrounds.

Self-Care – It is important to stay as healthy as possible. Eat a well-balanced diet and keep yourself well hydrated. Rest as much as possible. Consider sleeping when your infant sleeps. Continue your prenatal vitamins and Vitamin D 2000 IU daily. If possible, try to get a little bit of fresh air each day and do one thing each day that you enjoy.

Mental Health – Postpartum anxiety and depression is common and we anticipate that these challenging times will increase this risk. There are several online resources available to help, such as the AHS Help in Tough Times webpage (www.ahs.ca/helpintoughtimes) and AHS Birth and Babies program (www.birhandbabies.com) under the "Health & Wellness" tab. If you are struggling with your mental or emotional health, please contact The Riley Park Maternity Clinic. We can do an assessment over the telephone and help connect you with adequate resources and support.

Stay connected – Being alone and isolated is a risk factor for postpartum depression. Despite staying home, you'll still need support. Keep connected with family and friends through telephone or online methods. Being physically isolated does not need to mean being alone. If you are struggling with your mental or emotional health, please reach out to us.

If I am experiencing symptoms, have been tested positive for COVID-19, or need to self-isolate, can I still have [skin-to-skin contact](#) with my baby after delivery?

Yes, you can. Your health care provider will show you how to wash your hands and chest and wear a mask to protect your baby. You can continue this practice to keep your baby safe until you are feeling better. Feeling better means that all of your symptoms have resolved or 10 days has passed since the start of symptoms, whichever is longer.

Infant feeding - It is always your choice on how to feed your infant. However, breastfeeding remains a safe option for mothers and we are still recommending this as the best choice. Based on current evidence, COVID-19 is not transmitted through breastmilk. The [benefits of breastfeeding](#) contribute to the overall health of your baby and breastfeeding continues to be recommended.

The transmission of the COVID-19 virus occurs from respiratory droplets that can be spread from breathing, coughing, sneezing, or direct contact. If you have COVID-19 or symptoms of a respiratory illness, the following measures will help protect your baby from getting the infection:

- Always wash your hands before and after touching your baby.
- Avoid coughing or sneezing on your baby while breastfeeding or feeding by bottle.
- If possible, wear a face mask while breastfeeding your baby. If you don't have a face mask, see below.
- Wash your chest before breastfeeding.
- If you are expressing breastmilk with a pump, wash your hands before touching the pump, bottle, and other feeding equipment. Clean the equipment thoroughly after each use.
- Clean high-touch surfaces like feeding equipment and change pads often.

If you are using a face mask while feeding or caring for your baby, wash your hands with soap and water before putting on the mask. Do not touch the mask while using it, replace the mask if it gets damp or dirty, and do not reuse single-use masks. If you accidentally touch the mask while you are using it, wash your hands. Wash your hands after removing the mask.

If you do not have a face mask, alternatives can reduce some droplets from coughing or sneezing. Wrap a two-layer cloth like a scarf or bandana around your nose and mouth while feeding your baby. If you are using an alternative mask, wash your hands before covering your nose and mouth, do not touch the covering, and use it when feeding or caring for your baby. Replace the alternative mask if it gets wet and wash it thoroughly after each use. Alternatives are not as effective as face masks.

If you are not feeling well and are feeding by bottle, consider having someone who is feeling well feed your baby.

It is okay to care for your baby. However, when not providing direct care, keep your baby at least 2 metres (6 feet) away from anyone who is sick, may have COVID-19, or who has a respiratory illness.

The same steps that you were taking to reduce the risk of getting or spreading COVID-19 while you were pregnant (proper hygiene and social distancing, see above) will reduce the risk of your baby getting COVID-19.

Need help with breastfeeding? - Breastfeeding can sometimes be a challenge – we are here to help. There are physician attended lactation clinics in the city which can offer assistance and support via phone or by in person visits. Some breastfeeding clinics will take a self-referral where others will need a physician referral. They are the WellFed Clinic (NE), Westglen Medical Lactation Clinic (SW), Circle Medical Breastfeeding Clinic (SE), and Riley Park Maternity Lactation Clinic (NW). All patients of Riley Park Maternity Clinic can access our lactation clinic simply by calling 403 284-3711 ext 6. Please check the clinics websites for hours and contact information.

Infant illness – It can be difficult to know whether or not an infant is sick. It would be so much easier if they could just tell us! However, if your infant develops poor feeding, lethargy, jaundice, fever, cough, or rapid breathing, they need to be assessed immediately by a physician.

Stay informed – The situation is changing every single day. We are learning more and recommending new things to help. The most reliable source of information at this time is the Alberta Health Services website (www.ahs.ca), Alberta Government (www.alberta.ca) and Health Canada (www.canada.ca). Be skeptical of what you read elsewhere, as there is lots of inaccurate information being shared.