

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

March 30, 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 Perinatal and Infant Populations.

Q. Are pregnant women at greater risk of contracting COVID-19?

A. 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.

Q. Can COVID-19 cause problems for a pregnancy or be passed on to the unborn baby?

A. We do not currently know if COVID-19 can cause problems during pregnancy or affect the health of the baby after birth. We also do not know if a pregnant woman with COVID-19 can pass the virus to her baby during pregnancy or delivery. At this time, no infants born to mothers with COVID-19 have tested positive for the COVID-19 virus. The virus also has not been found in samples of amniotic fluid or breastmilk.

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

A.

- 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 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 “safer at home” measures:
 - Avoid gathering in groups
 - Keep distance of 6 feet
 - Only go out for essential items and appointments

Q. When should I contact my medical provider?

A. As always, symptoms of pregnancy and postpartum related complications should 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 concern, call right away if you experience:

- Cough
- Fever (100.4 or greater)
- 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 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, while keeping you and your baby’s health and well-being the priority.

Q. If I have Medicaid or KanCare coverage for my pregnancy, how will it be affected by this pandemic?

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?

A. Good handwashing and social distancing is the most effective way to keep your infant safe from communicable diseases such as COVID-19. Continuing to follow social distancing and “safer at home” 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 disease to your family.

Q. Is it safe to breastfeed my baby?

A. Breast milk provides protection against many illnesses. There are rare exceptions when breastfeeding or feeding expressed breast milk is not recommended. Much is still unknown however, 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 breast milk. 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. Please see the following resources provided by the Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition for more information on [COVID-19 and breastfeeding](#).

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 (i.e. contacting the 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