

HAVING A BABY DURING COVID-19

Congratulations on welcoming a new baby!

Having a baby can be an exciting, intense or stressful time in people's lives.

Hospitals and birth centres in Ontario have put extra policies in place to help keep you and your baby safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is best to go to your planned birth-place where care providers and your health records are available.

Policies may be different at your place of birth and may change as the pandemic evolves. Your health and your baby's health are a priority. Hospitals and birthing centres are safe places. Your health care team is here to help.

Here is some information to help all future parents know what to expect:

Where you give birth is based on your choice and your medical needs.

Call or check the website of your place of birth ahead of time to find out about their policies. Find out about the way admissions are done, parking, food for the support person, and items to bring, etc.

If giving birth during the COVID-19 pandemic worries you, talk to your health care provider about it. Discuss ahead of time how to manage pain and other questions you may have.

During the pandemic, some procedures may be different than what you expect. The best birth plan is a flexible one that encourages a healthy birth and reduces risk of virus spread.

You may be able to go home early if you and your baby are well.

Once home with your baby, look for ways to connect with people who can support you. If you are feeling lonely, depressed, or anxious, let your health care provider know. Contact your local public health unit to see what supports are available in your area. To find your local public health unit, go to www.health.gov.on.ca/en/common/system/services/phu/locations.aspx

Some tips:

Find a support person who is well and does not have COVID-19. Have a backup support person in case your planned one becomes unwell.

Once home with baby, find a healthy adult to help you. That person can change the diapers, bathe, and hold the baby.

More information can be found at: www.healthnexus.ca

HAVING A BABY DURING COVID-19

Information for people who have or may have COVID-19:

A health care provider will assess you when you arrive at your place of birth. The following are general guidelines for people who have or may have COVID-19.

From what we know now, COVID-19 is not likely to be passed from the parent to the baby during pregnancy. Babies can be infected with the virus after birth by close contact with someone who has COVID-19.

You will need to wear a mask during your labour. You will also need to wash your hands often with soap and water or use hand sanitizer. This will help lower the risk of infecting your support person, your health care providers and your baby after birth.

Your support person will be asked questions about COVID-19 when arriving at the place of birth. It is important to tell the truth to keep everyone safe. If your support person has or may have COVID-19, they will not be able to attend the birth. Read the handout "Labour Support".

Having COVID-19 is not a reason alone to change your birth plan, for example, being induced or having a caesarean birth.

Your baby will be tested for COVID-19 after birth using a swab to their nose or throat.

You will be able to have your baby skin-to-skin if you are both well enough.

If you're planning to breastfeed and you're well enough, read the handout "Infant Feeding".

If you're sick and choose to be separated from your baby to reduce risk, your care providers can help you make a plan.

After the birth, your baby may be able to be in the same room as you. You will need to wear a mask all the time. When you are not providing direct care for your baby, you should be at least two metres away.

You and your baby will be able to go home once well.

At home, you will need to continue to wear a mask and keep a distance when not giving direct care to your baby. It will be important to wash your hands well before all baby care. Your local public health unit can give you more information about this.

Stay in touch with your health care provider, especially during the first two weeks after birth. Call to arrange a check-up visit for you and your baby. If you do not have a health care provider when you go home, contact your hospital or birth centre for information on where to go for follow-up.