Parent Information for COVID-19

Royal Hospital for Women	**APRIL 2020**

This information aims to answer some commonly asked questions about COVID-19. It is general information only. Ask your doctor, nurse or midwife about what care is right for you and your baby. This interim information has been made available by Queensland Health and the New South Wales Sepsis Prevention in Neonates Group (SPRING), which is finalising an official document for use in New South Wales.

What is COVID-19?

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) is the disease caused by a new coronavirus named SARS-CoV-2. It can easily be passed from person to person. In most people with good health, COVID-19 is mild. Severe symptoms, such as pneumonia are more common in older people and in those who are already unwell.

As this is a new virus, we are still learning how it may affect you and your baby.

How will COVID-19 affect you?

It is expected that most pregnant women who get the virus will experience only mild or moderate cold/flu like symptoms.

If you are a smoker, have a heart or lung condition such as asthma, or other long-term condition, you may become more unwell than a pregnant woman who doesn't. It is important that you tell your maternity health care provider if you have other health conditions.

How will COVID-19 affect your baby?

The risk of infection passing from mother to baby during pregnancy is thought to be low.

Some babies born to women with COVID-19 have been born early. In most cases this was because the decision was made for the baby to be born early because the mother was unwell.

Can COVID-19 be prevented or cured?

There is no vaccine to prevent COVID-19 yet. There is also no cure or specific treatment for it. The best thing to do is to reduce your chance of getting the infection in the first place.
You can do this by:
- washing your hands regularly and frequently – use soap and water for 20 seconds or alcohol-based hand sanitiser/gel
- using social distancing (stay 1.5 metres away from other people)
- avoiding anyone who has a fever, cough or symptoms of a cold or chest infection
- avoiding touching your eyes, nose and mouth

If you have COVID-19, can you breastfeed?

Yes, you can. If you and your baby are well enough, this will be supported.
Your decision to breastfeed may involve thinking about your baby's health, how sick you are and whether you are well enough to care for your baby. Your healthcare team will discuss your individual situation and feeding options with you.

What is advised about breastfeeding with other infections?

In general, breastfeeding helps protect against many illnesses. For example, when a mother has the flu, breastfeeding is still encouraged with extra care to avoid spreading the virus to her baby.

Can your baby get COVID-19 from breastfeeding?

The COVID-19 virus has not been found in breastmilk. However, COVID-19 is easily passed from person to person through close contact. Additional precautions are recommended while in close contact with your baby as they are for other infections.

What precautions should you take when looking after your baby?

If you have COVID-19, it is important to do everything you can to prevent your baby getting the virus, even if you don't have symptoms. This is why it is very important that you:
- wash your hands before and after touching your baby – use soap and water for 20 seconds or alcohol-based hand sanitiser/gel
- wear a mask while in close contact including while breastfeeding
- have a healthy adult assist you to care for your baby where possible
- routinely clean surfaces you have touched including your mobile phone

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