

HAVING A BABY DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC



**San Joaquin County
Public Health Services
Maternal, Child, and
Adolescent Programs**



Pregnancy

Being pregnant may put you at higher risk of serious illness from COVID-19. You may be at higher risk of going into labor early and having a premature baby if you have COVID-19.

What can I do?

- Wear a face covering when out in public.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Stay at least 6 feet away from people who do not live with you.
- Keep going to prenatal care appointments – ask about virtual appointments!
- Ask your doctor or nurse how their prenatal care has changed due to COVID-19. Clinics are working hard to slow the spread of COVID-19.
- Make healthy lifestyle choices about nutrition and exercise. Obesity, diabetes, or other serious medical conditions increase your risk of serious illness from COVID-19.



Labor and Delivery

Hospitals are working hard to slow the spread of COVID-19 in labor and delivery units. Policies are changing quickly as we learn more about COVID-19. Each hospital makes their own rules and policies for infection control, and those policies may change at any time.

What questions should I ask the hospital?

Ask questions ahead of time so you know what to expect when it is time to deliver.

- How have your hospital labor policies changed because of COVID-19? What can I expect?
- Can I bring a support person to the hospital?
- What are my pain management options?
- Do I have to stay in my room the whole time?
- What are hospital policies if I have COVID-19? For example, can I breastfeed? Can I hold my baby skin to skin? Will my baby be separated from me?

You have the right to:

- Make decisions together with the healthcare team about your care and your baby's care.
- Understand the risks and benefits of all care recommendations for you and your baby. If something is not clear, ask as many questions as you need to.
- Speak up about what you want and need.
- Be treated with respect at all times.

Babies and COVID-19

Babies can be infected with COVID-19, but we do not know if they are being infected during pregnancy, during delivery, or after birth. Experts believe most babies who get COVID-19 are infected after birth through close contact with an infected person.

What are the risks for my baby?

There is not a lot of information on the effects of COVID-19 infection in babies and young children. Based on what we do know:

- Babies with medical conditions and premature babies may be at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19.
- Most full-term newborns who are infected with COVID-19 have had mild or no symptoms; however, some newborns have had serious illness.
- Babies under one year old may be at higher risk of serious illness when compared to older children.

What can I do to keep my baby and me from getting COVID-19?

Take precautions to prevent COVID-19:

- Wear a face covering – children under two years old should not wear face coverings.
- Wash your hands often.
- Stay at least 6 feet away from people who do not live with you.
- Avoid visits with people who do not live with you and stay home if you can. Take this special time to bond with your baby.

If you start having COVID-19 symptoms such as fever, cough, or difficulty breathing, call your doctor and get tested. Information on free COVID-19 testing sites can be found at <https://bit.ly/3e3LVxh>.

Babies and COVID-19

What if I have COVID-19 and my baby doesn't?

There are many benefits to close contact and cuddling for both mom and baby, but some parents may be uncomfortable with the risk of giving COVID-19 to the baby. Also, keep in mind that if you are severely ill, you might not be able to care for your baby until you feel better.

- Talk to your doctor or nurse about the risks and benefits of caring for your baby while you are sick versus choosing temporary separation from your baby. The decision is yours.
- Babies can be infected with COVID-19 by respiratory droplets when they are being held by an infected person. The risk of infecting the baby with COVID-19 is low as long as you:
 - Wash your hands before caring for your baby.
 - Wear a face covering when holding and caring for your baby.
 - Try to stay 6 feet away from your baby when possible. Consider having another healthy person help feed, hold, and care for your baby if possible.
- People who have tested positive for COVID-19 should talk to a doctor and follow public health isolation orders. You are no longer considered contagious after your isolation period is over.



Babies and COVID-19

If I have COVID-19, is breastfeeding recommended?

- Yes. Breastmilk is the best source of nutrition for most babies, and it protects babies against many illnesses.
- We do not know if the virus can be passed to babies in breastmilk, but experts agree it is unlikely. Breastfeeding is encouraged, even if you are infected with COVID-19.
- Babies can be infected with COVID-19 when they are being held by an infected person, so you should wear a face covering and wash your hands before each feeding.
- If you are pumping milk, wash your hands and your pump parts well with soap and water before and after each use.
- Recognize that these decisions, such as temporary separation or choosing to breastfeed or not, are difficult and emotional decisions. Talk to your doctor or nurse to better understand the risks and benefits of each option.



Maternal Mental Health

You may be feeling fear, uncertainty, stress, or anxiety because of COVID-19. Pregnancy and postpartum hormones can make these feelings stronger. Taking care of your emotional health will help you think clearly and react to the urgent need to protect yourself and your family.

What can I do?

- Reach out to friends and family by phone, video, texts, etc. Avoid meeting up in person.
- Make time to unwind, take deep breaths, and participate in healthy activities that you usually enjoy.
- Take breaks from social media and watching, reading, or listening to news stories.
- Try to eat healthy, exercise regularly, and get plenty of sleep.

What if I still do not feel better?

Many people experience depression, anxiety, or other mental health conditions during pregnancy and after delivery. Although these feelings are common, it does not mean that suffering is okay. There are many services available to help you feel better, including medication, counseling, support groups, and more.

- Talk to your doctor or nurse about how you are feeling. They can give you tips and resources to help you feel better.
- If stress and negative emotions get in the way of your daily activities for several days in a row, call your doctor or nurse. They can help you get support services like counseling (in person or virtually).
- Call the San Joaquin County Warm-Line at 209-468-8686. Someone is there 24 hours a day to talk with you.
- If you start having any thoughts about hurting yourself, your baby, or others, call 209-468-8686 or 9-1-1 to get help right away.

What to Say to Friends/Family to Keep You and Your Baby Safe

Your friends and family may want to see you and your new baby, and it can be difficult to know how to talk to them about putting off in-person visits. Here are some things you can say:

- I would love for you to visit, but with COVID-19, I'm doing my best to keep us all safe. Can we connect on video chat instead?
- I'm sorry, we can't come for a visit now. We are staying at home to help stop the spread of the virus, but I would love to share some baby pictures with you.
- I know it is hard, but the safest thing we can do is stay at home as much as possible to protect our new baby from COVID-19 and other illnesses.

Who We Are

If you are pregnant or have a baby, the Maternal, Child, and Adolescent Health Programs at Public Health Services have a variety of free support services. Our dedicated team of professionals, specializing in pregnancy and parenting, offers group sessions and/or individual appointments. All services are currently virtual or by telephone:

- Nurse Home Visiting
- Healthy Families San Joaquin
- Black Infant Health
- Cal-Learn

Contact Us

**For more information
or to enroll, please call:
209-468-3004.**

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