

# COVID-19 (Coronavirus) and pregnancy

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**You may be feeling unsure how COVID-19 could affect you, your baby and your pregnancy care. This leaflet summarises the risks of COVID-19 during pregnancy, the key advice to follow and what to do if you think you have symptoms of COVID-19.**

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## The risks of COVID-19 during pregnancy

COVID-19 infection during pregnancy is likely to be a mild, flu-like illness – there is no evidence that being pregnant makes you more likely to become infected. However, recent studies have shown that both hospital admissions and severe illness are more common while pregnant (compared to those not pregnant), particularly after 28 weeks' gestation. If you are from an Asian or Black ethnic group or have underlying medical conditions, you also have an increased chance of developing severe illness. Your midwife or obstetrician (pregnancy doctor) will discuss your individual risk with you and plan your care accordingly.

## Key advice during pregnancy

- The most effective way to protect yourself is to be vaccinated.
- The 'new variants' of COVID-19 are thought to be more infectious and to lead to more severe disease during pregnancy. For these reasons, you may want to take a more cautious approach to social distancing, face coverings and hand washing if you are mixing outside your household group. For up-to-date information go to <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/covid-19/how-to-avoid-catching-and-spreading-covid-19/> or ask your community midwife.
- Washing your hands regularly is always recommended and you may choose to wear face coverings when you leave your home – ensure your mouth and nose are covered.
- Stay away from anyone who has symptoms of COVID-19.
- Stay active and hydrated to reduce the risk of blood clots.
- Eat a healthy diet; take folic acid and vitamin D supplements as advised during pregnancy.
- Attend all of your antenatal appointments and scans unless you have symptoms of COVID-19 or think you have been infected. *Speak to your midwife if you need to reschedule an appointment due to the reasons above.*
- Contact the Maternity Triage line 0118 322 7304 if you are worried about yourself or your unborn baby.
- If you have been advised that you are in a high-risk group and were advised to shield, **please ensure to let your community midwife know**. It is important to alert hospital staff of your increased risk if you are admitted to hospital.
- We recommend that you have your winter flu vaccine, unless there are good reasons not to; discuss these with your GP, midwife or obstetrician.

## **What to do if you think you have symptoms of COVID-19**

If you think that your symptoms are mild and you can complete a sentence without pausing to breathe, please call the Maternity Triage line on **0118 322 7304**. The Triage midwife will assess your symptoms and decide with you if you need further assessment

**If you feel breathless, please call 111 or 999.**

**It is important to seek medical advice as early as possible if you have any concerns about you or your unborn baby.**

## **Maternity appointments if you have COVID-19**

Do not attend any maternity appointments or ultrasound scans if you have, or think you may have COVID-19.

- To re-arrange community midwife appointments, please call 0118 322 8059. If you are asked to leave a message, please do so and the community team will call you the following day.
- If you are due to attend hospital for a scan, please call 0118 322 7279. The team will advise if it is safe to delay your scan.

## **Birthing partners**

If your birthing partner has symptoms of COVID-19, has recently tested positive for COVID-19, they will not be able to support you during labour or your stay in hospital. During your pregnancy, it may be helpful to plan who your 'backup' birthing partner would be, if needed.

## **COVID-19 vaccination in pregnancy and while breastfeeding**

The COVID-19 vaccination is safe and strongly recommended in pregnancy. This is because you and your baby/babies are considered at additional risks of significant complications from COVID-19. The decision whether to have the vaccination during pregnancy is your choice. The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG) and The Royal College of Midwives (RCM) have produced an information leaflet about the benefits and possible risks of the vaccination to women and birthing people (a link to these websites can be found at the end of this leaflet); these are summarised below:

### **Over 200,000 vaccines have been given in pregnancy with no safety concerns**

- Receiving two doses of the vaccine is almost 100% effective at preventing admission to hospital with COVID-19 during pregnancy. This is even more effective than in non-pregnant people.
- COVID-19 causes stillbirth in 1 in 100 cases where someone has become unwell with it. COVID-19 increases the risk of a baby being born prematurely by 3 times. One in ten have needed admission to care Intensive Care due to COVID-19 during pregnancy.
- The vaccines do not contain live Coronavirus or any ingredients that are harmful during pregnancy. Unlike some other medications, the vaccine cannot pass through to the baby and affect their long-term development. The vaccine does not pass through breastmilk. Once vaccinated you will produce protective antibodies against Covid infection which are then passed to the baby when breastfeeding.

## Additional resources about COVID-19 and pregnancy

- Royal College of Midwives website <https://www.rcm.org.uk/coronavirus-hub/>
- Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists website <https://www.rcog.org.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-pregnancy-and-women-s-health/>
- NHS website: [www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/)
- Healthy eating and vitamin supplementation in pregnancy: <https://www.rcog.org.uk/globalassets/documents/patients/patient-information-leaflets/pregnancy/pi-healthy-eating-and-vitamin-supplements-in-pregnancy.pdf>
- WHO Questions and Answers - COVID 19 vaccines and pregnancy: [WHO-2019-nCoV-FAQ-Pregnancy-Vaccines-2022.1-eng.pdf](https://www.who.int/news-room/questions-and-answers/question-detail/covid-19-vaccines-and-pregnancy)
- COVID-19 infant feeding resources: <https://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets/maternity-covid-19-and-infant-feeding-resources.html>[www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/coronavirus](http://www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/coronavirus)
- Factsheet on use of Covid-19 vaccinations in breastfeeding and pregnancy: [www.hifn.org/covid-interim](http://www.hifn.org/covid-interim)

## Contact numbers and queries

If you have any queries or need to contact us, please use the number below

- Maternity Triage: 0118 322 7304
- Maternity Call Centre: 0118 322 8964 (select option 1)
- Community Midwives office: 0118 322 8059
- Maternity Ultrasound: 0118 322 7279

To find out more about our Trust visit [www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk](http://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk)

**Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.**

S Fleming, Consultant MW (Maternity), February 2021

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### Our Maternity Strategy and Vision

*'Working together with women, birthing people and families to offer compassionate, supportive care and informed choice; striving for equity and excellence in our maternity service.'*

You can read our maternity strategy here



Compassionate

Aspirational

Resourceful

Excellent