COVID-19 INFECTIONS AND PREGNANCY

Can COVID-19 affect a growing fetus?
It is very unlikely that COVID-19 will affect a growing fetus. Most pregnant people have mild symptoms that do not require medical care and their babies are born healthy.

The only way that an infection can be passed from mother to fetus is if the virus gets into the mother’s bloodstream. This can occur in pregnant people who are extremely sick and need complex medical care or who have rare immune system disorders.

If mom gets so sick with COVID-19 that it affects her internal organs, the placenta may be harmed. Preterm labour starts in about 15% of pregnancies affected by COVID-19. This may be the body’s way of protecting the fetus and reducing complications for the mother.

Can the baby get COVID-19 during birth?
In general, we don't think this occurs. Recent studies have not found the virus in vaginal and amniotic fluid. However, in very severe infection, there is a small risk of the baby being born unwell. This is expected when any severe illness occurs at the time of birth. Some newborns have tested positive for COVID-19 shortly after birth. It is not known whether they got the virus before, during or after birth.

Can the baby get COVID-19 from mom after birth?
Newborns can get COVID-19 from their mothers, other caregivers, and anyone else they are in contact with. The risk of a newborn getting COVID-19 from their mother is low, especially when the mother takes steps such as wearing a mask and washing hands. The mother’s body makes antibodies to fight COVID-19. These are passed to the baby through the placenta and through breastmilk, giving newborns some protection. COVID-19 tends to be very mild in infants and children under 10 years of age. Scientists are studying this now.

Possible complications of COVID-19 for pregnant patients
COVID-19 infections in pregnancy can have complications that can be prevented and treated. It is important to keep connected to your healthcare provider to keep you as healthy as possible during your pregnancy.

Blood clots
One of the changes of pregnancy is that blood becomes more “sticky” so that it can form clots to help stop bleeding in childbirth. COVID-19 appears to have a similar effect. Combined, this can cause abnormal clotting which can create “plugs” in the bloodstream preventing flow to important organs like the lungs, heart and brain. Your health-care provider may recommend low-dose blood thinners to prevent these dangerous clots.

Blood clots in the lungs can cause chest pain, shortness of breath, and coughing up blood. Clots in the legs can cause swelling and pain, usually on one side. Blood clots in the brain cause symptoms of stroke such as leg or arm weakness, numbness, slurred speech, facial drooping or confusion. If you have these symptoms go to your nearest emergency department immediately or call 911.

Breathing changes in pregnancy
When pregnant, airways become increasingly crowded. Over time it can feel like a deep breath is slightly less satisfying. While this sensation of shortness of breath is common in pregnancy, if it is
accompained with a rapid rate of breathing or feeling faint, see a doctor immediately. When COVID-19 is severe in pregnancy, patients are more likely to need intensive care and breathing supports such as ventilators because of these airway changes.

Warning signs to watch for:
If you are pregnant and develop fever, cough, shortness of breath or weakness, it could be due to COVID-19, another illness or a complication of pregnancy. Call your healthcare provider or Health Links–Info Santé at 204-788-8200 or 1-888-315-9257 for advice.

Do not delay getting emergency care because of COVID-19
If you need emergency help, call 911 right away or go to your nearest emergency department. Tell them that you are pregnant and are having an emergency. It is important to seek medical attention early to get the care you need.

Go to your nearest emergency department immediately or call 911 for:
- New or severe chest pain
- Severe shortness of breath
- Coughing up blood
- Fast breathing
- Symptoms of stroke such as leg or arm weakness, numbness, slurred speech, facial drooping

Am I now immune to getting COVID-19 in the future?
Emerging evidence has shown that a person can be re-infected with the virus that causes COVID-19. It is too soon to say whether the second infection may differ from the first infection.

While COVID-19 infection may provide about 3 months of resistance to another infection, we do not know what level of protection it may offer against severe infection.

If you have had a COVID-19 infection you should continue to:
- Wash your hands frequently
- Only leave home for essential purposes
- Wear a mask when physical distancing is not possible
- Minimize contacts outside your household
- Avoid touching your face
- Cough/sneeze into a tissue or your sleeve
- Attend all virtual and clinic visits with your prenatal health care provider unless you are unwell
- For those with diabetes, pay close attention to sugar levels and call your provider if they are frequently high

After you are well again, remember:
- Public health orders apply to all people including those who have recovered from COVID-19
- If you develop symptoms of COVID-19 three or more months after your first infection, you should isolate and go for testing
● If you develop symptoms less than three months after the first infection, a decision to re-test will depend on the severity of your symptoms and whether you need to be admitted to a hospital

● According to the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) and the Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (SOGC), the COVID-19 vaccine may be offered to people who are pregnant and/or breastfeeding after they have reviewed the risks and benefits with their immunizer or health care provider

● Talk to your health care provider about whether the COVID-19 vaccine is appropriate for you. [https://manitoba.ca/asset_library/en/covid/covid19_vaccine_factsheet.pdf](https://manitoba.ca/asset_library/en/covid/covid19_vaccine_factsheet.pdf)