

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Postpartum Care at Home: Caring for yourself and your newborn

You have symptoms and have been tested for COVID-19. If your test result is positive you are asked to isolate and recover at home to limit the risk of spreading COVID-19 to others. If you have been tested and are waiting for your results, you should follow these recommendations until you receive a negative test result AND your symptoms have been resolved for 24 hours.

Most people who get sick with COVID-19 will have mild symptoms and should recover at home. If you or your baby start to experience serious symptoms, you should seek medical attention. Follow this advice on how you can take care of yourself and your newborn.

Once you and your baby are home from the hospital, a public health nurse will call you to see how you and your new baby are doing. When the nurse calls, tell them that you have either been tested for COVID-19 and are waiting for your result, OR (if you have received a positive result), that you have tested positive for COVID-19.

Public health officials will contact you daily to assess your temperature, symptoms, general well-being and respond to any questions or concerns you may have. Public Health officials will let you know if any of your close household contacts, including your baby, also need daily monitoring for symptoms of COVID-19. If you test positive for COVID-19, you should continue to isolate for a minimum of 14 days from the start of your symptoms AND until your symptoms have been resolved for 24 hours. If your test result is negative, you should continue to isolate until your symptoms have resolved. Stay at home and avoid contact with other people for the entire period of self-isolation.

For information on Isolation and Self-Monitoring for Symptomatic Individuals Recovering at Home, refer to https://www.gov.mb.ca/asset_library/en/coronavirus/factsheet-isolation-selfmonitoring-recoveringhome.pdf.

If you have a support person, they should read How to Care for a Person with COVID-19 at Home, available at https://www.gov.mb.ca/asset_library/en/coronavirus/factsheet-careforperson-withcovid-at-home.pdf.

What should I do if my symptoms get worse?

If you start to feel worse or you have a new fever, chest pain or trouble breathing, call:

- Health Links - Info Santé (204-788-8200 or 1-888-315-9257). A nurse will help you determine whether you need a medical assessment.
- **911 if it is an emergency.**

It is important to seek medical attention early to get the care you need.

I think my baby is getting sick. When should I seek health care? Where should I go?

If you think your baby is getting sick or they are not feeding well, call your health care provider, Health Links - Info Santé (204-788-8200 or 1-888-315-9257), or in an Emergency, call 911.

EMERGENCY WARNING SIGNS include:

- Pauses in breathing for more than 10 seconds
- Baby is very drowsy, cannot be woken
- Blue lips or face, grey or very pale skin

If you see these Emergency Warning Signs, call 911.

URGENT WARNING SIGNS, include:

- Cough or difficulty breathing (it seems like your baby is breathing faster than normal, you might notice their nostrils flaring)
- Fever (more than 37.5° C, measured in the armpit) or low temperature (less than 36.5° C, measured in the armpit). If you do not have a thermometer, and your newborn feels too hot or cold, call your health care provider for advice.
- Yellow skin or eyes
- Seems more sleepy than normal, hard to wake up
- Poor feeding, vomiting or diarrhea
- Your baby is showing signs of dehydration (poor feeding and no wet diaper for more than six to eight hours, dry mouth, sunken soft spot (fontanelle) on baby's head)

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If you see these URGENT WARNING SIGNS, your baby should be seen by your health care provider today. Call the baby's health care provider or call Health Links – Info Santé at 204-788-8200 or toll-free at 1-888-315-9257.

What can I do to care for myself while at home if I test positive for COVID-19?

There is so much to adjust to as a new parent. Your body is recovering from the delivery, you are getting to know your baby and you are learning their sleep and hunger cues. That is a lot on its own, and dealing with COVID-19 can bring other concerns and stress. Good self-care and, if possible, a support person who can help care for you and your baby may be helpful.

If you have a support person, they should be healthy (no fever, cough or cold symptoms) and not at risk for severe symptoms of COVID-19 (under 60 years of age and without underlying health conditions or weakened immune systems). The support person should wear a medical face mask when caring for you and your baby.

- Rest often. Sleep when your baby sleeps. As much as possible, let your support person care for the baby when you need a rest.
- Eat nutritious food, and drink plenty of clear fluids (e.g. water).
- For fever or pain relief, acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (Advil®) are both safe to use when breastfeeding. Note: as part of your self-monitoring, you are expected to take your temperature twice a day. It is important to get an accurate temperature reading. Therefore, wait at least 4 hours after you have taken acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (Advil®).
- Continue to take your prenatal vitamins until you follow up with your health care provider.

Having to isolate while in the early days following childbirth may feel lonely. It is important to pay attention to your feelings and take care of your mental health. This is also important for your support person.

- If you are not doing well, reach out for help. Call your health care provider or public health nurse. If it is a crisis, put your baby in a safe place and call the Klinik Crisis Line (24 hours) 204-786-8686; Toll Free: 1-888-322-3019; TTY: 204-784-4097.

- Right now you need to focus on your recovery. Don't feel pressured to call everyone you know, but if you are feeling lonely, connect by phone, email or social media with family or friends who are supportive.
- For more information: Postpartum Depression Association of Manitoba, www.ppdmanitoba.ca/ Healthy Parenting Winnipeg, <https://healthyparentingwinnipeg.ca/topics/well-being-mental-health/>.

What precautions should I take while caring for my baby at home?

Take these precautions to avoid spreading the virus to your baby:

- Clean your hands often, especially before and after caring for baby (e.g., changing diaper, feeding, holding baby).
- Wear a mask when you are near your baby and/or your support person and when you are breastfeeding
 - o When putting on a mask, you should first wash your hands or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer (at least 60 percent alcohol). Check the label – most products are safe but some may have a warning not to use in pregnancy or while breastfeeding. First place the straps around your ears or tie behind your head, and then fit it by pinching across the bridge of your nose and pulling the bottom under your chin.
 - o Do not touch the mask when it is on your face.
 - o Carefully remove your mask by holding the straps. Discard medical masks into a garbage bin lined with a plastic bag. Put a non-medical mask into the laundry hamper. Wash your hands again.
 - o **Do not put a mask on your baby or any child under the age of two.**
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue instead of your arm and clean your hands. This will help keep your arms and sleeves clean for holding and feeding your baby. If you have coughed or sneezed into your arm or sleeve, wash your arm or change your clothes before handling your baby.
- If you are coughing a lot, have your support person care for your baby.
- Make sure that your environment is cleaned and disinfected at least twice daily.

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Your baby should sleep in the same room as you to help establish bonding and breastfeeding. Your baby should sleep in a crib or bassinet placed at least two metres (six feet) away from your bed. This will help protect your baby from getting sick.

- The baby should be placed to sleep on their back in a bassinet or crib for every sleep. No loose blankets, bumper pads, toys or pillows should be in the crib or bassinet. For more information on safe sleep see, <https://healthyparentingwinnipeg.ca/safe-sleep-and-your-baby/>.
- The baby should not sleep in the same room as anyone else who is sick (cough, sneezing, fever).
- Keep the room door open or open the window slightly, as the weather allows, and turn on a fan to promote good airflow.

Can I still breastfeed?

Breastfeeding lowers your baby's risk of infection and illness throughout infancy and childhood. The virus that causes COVID-19 **has not been found in breast milk**. You can do skin-to-skin contact and breastfeed your baby.

Follow these tips to avoid spreading COVID-19 to your baby:

- Wash your hands and your chest and breasts thoroughly with soap and warm water before feeding your baby.
- Protect your baby from your droplets (coughs, sneezes, saliva).
 - o Wear a medical face mask when breastfeeding or holding your baby. You may use a non-medical mask or face covering if you do not have a medical mask.
 - o If you don't have a mask or face covering, drape a nursing or receiving blanket over your shoulder and the baby while breastfeeding, similar to the way some mothers breastfeed in public.

If you are having difficulty breastfeeding or you are worried about your baby, call your public health nurse, health care provider or the Breastfeeding Hotline 204-788-8667 or toll free 1-888-315-9257. The Breastfeeding Hotline is currently also being used to answer COVID-19 questions. Listen to the instructions to talk to a nurse about breastfeeding (press 2 after listening to the options).

If you are bottle-feeding your baby, have your support person feed the baby with expressed breastmilk or formula. Your support person should wash their hands before feeding baby and wear a mask. Be sure to follow guidelines for preparing formula and sterilizing bottles, equipment and breast pumps.

For more information read Formula Feeding Your Baby, <https://www.gov.mb.ca/health/healthyeating/docs/formula.pdf> and Breastfeeding your Baby, https://www.gov.mb.ca/healthychild/healthybaby/hb_breastfeedingyourbaby.pdf.