

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

Isolating at Home after your COVID-19 Test

Once you are home from the hospital, a public health nurse will call you to see how you and your new baby are doing. You should tell the nurse that you have been tested for COVID-19 and are waiting for your result OR that you have tested positive for COVID-19. You and your close contacts, including your baby, will need to isolate at home and monitor for COVID-19 symptoms daily.

- If your test result is positive you must isolate and recover at home to limit the risk of spreading COVID-19 to others. You should continue to isolate for a minimum of 10 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 for 24 hours.
- 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.
- If you are a close contact of a person with COVID-19 or you are isolating due to travel, you must isolate for 14 days.
- **Do not stop isolating at home until advised by public health.**

For information on Isolation and Self-Monitoring for Symptomatic Individuals Recovering at Home, refer to https://manitoba.ca/asset_library/en/covid/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://manitoba.ca/asset_library/en/covid/factsheet-careforperson-withcovid-at-home.pdf

What should I do if I develop symptoms or my symptoms get worse?

Most people who get sick with COVID-19 have mild symptoms and can recover at home. If you or your baby start to experience serious symptoms, you should seek medical attention.

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

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 or confusion

I think my baby is getting sick. Where should I go?

If you think your baby is getting sick or they are not feeding well, this could be due to COVID-19 infection or other health problems. Call your health care provider, or Health Links - Info Santé (204-788-8200 or 1-888-315- 9257).

Call 911 or go to your nearest emergency department immediately if you see these EMERGENCY WARNING SIGNS:

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

See your healthcare provider today if you see these URGENT WARNING SIGNS:

- Cough or difficulty breathing (Baby seems to be breathing faster than normal. Nostrils may be flaring.)
- Fever (more than 37.5° C) or low temperature (less than 36.5° C). Take baby's temperature by putting a thermometer in the baby's 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
- Signs of dehydration such as poor feeding and no wet diaper for more than six to eight hours, dry mouth, sunken soft spot (fontanelle) on baby's head

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. The support person will be

considered a close contact, and they will need to self-isolate for 14 days after their last exposure to you during your isolation period.

Take care of your physical health

- 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 such as water.
- For fever or pain relief, acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (Advil®) are 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®) before taking your temperature.
- You may choose to continue to take your prenatal vitamins until you follow up with your health care provider.
- Stay in motion. Lying flat on your back or staying on the couch for long periods can worsen a lung infection and is not good for circulation. Make sure you are up and about every 2 hours, and alternate front and side lying frequently.
- Exercise your lungs. Every couple of hours take a deep breath followed by a forceful cough and repeat 10 times. This helps clear phlegm and keep airways open.

Take care of your mental health

Make your mental health a priority. Reach out to family and friends for emotional support. Meditation, journaling and accepting support are part of recovery. Consider limiting social media if it is a source of stress.

- If you are not coping 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.
- For more information: Postpartum Depression Association of Manitoba, www.ppdmanitoba.ca/ and Healthy Parenting Winnipeg, <https://healthyparentingwinnipeg.ca/topics/well-being-mental-health/>.

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

Follow these steps 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). Wash your hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer (at least 60 percent alcohol). Check the label for *Do Not Use in Pregnancy or While Breastfeeding*.
 - Wear a mask when you are near your baby and/or your support person and when you are breastfeeding. First place the straps around your ears or tie behind your head. Then fit it by pinching across the bridge of your nose and pulling the bottom under your chin.
 - Do not touch the mask when it is on your face.
 - Carefully remove your mask by holding the straps. Discard medical and

disposable masks into a garbage bin lined with a plastic bag. Put a non-medical (cloth) mask into the laundry. Wash your hands again.

- 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 have recently coughed or sneezed with your chest exposed, cleanse the breast area with soap and water before breastfeeding or holding baby skin-to-skin.
- If you are coughing a lot, have your support person care for your baby. You might try sucking on hard candies/lozenges to reduce your cough.
- Make sure that your home is cleaned and disinfected at least twice daily.

Keeping Baby Safe During Sleep

Your baby should sleep in the same room as you to help establish bonding and breastfeeding. 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.

- If you have COVID-19, place the crib or bassinet at least two metres (six feet) away from your bed. Keep the room door open or open the window slightly, as the weather allows, and turn on a fan to promote good airflow.
- Other than you, baby should not sleep in the same room as anyone else who is sick (cough, sneezing, fever) including your partner or other children. This will help protect your baby.

For more information on Safe Sleep see, <https://healthyparentingwinnipeg.ca/safe-sleep-and-your-baby/>

Can I still breastfeed?

Breastfeeding lowers your baby's risk of infection and illness throughout infancy and childhood. While the COVID-19 virus has been found in breastmilk, the virus is not felt to be spread through breastmilk.

The mother's body makes antibodies to fight COVID-19. These are passed to the baby through breastmilk, giving newborns some protection.

You can do skin-to-skin contact and breastfeed your baby. Skin-to-skin contact is shown to help protect mother's mood, mother-baby bonding and to support baby's growth and development. The World Health Organization recommends this close contact while breastfeeding OR bottle-feeding your baby.

Follow these tips to avoid spreading COVID-19 to your baby while breastfeeding/feeding:

- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water before feeding your baby.
- If you have recently coughed or sneezed with your chest exposed, cleanse the breast

area with soap and water before breastfeeding or holding baby skin-to-skin.

- Protect your baby from your coughs, sneezes, and saliva by:
 - Wearing 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.
 - 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. They may also practice skin-to-skin (also called kangaroo) care for baby's benefit. 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

How long am I contagious?

Most people are contagious for two days before their symptoms develop and for ten days after they begin. While a person may still have a cough or continue to have loss of taste and smell, we have very good evidence that they can't spread the infection to others after that twelve-day period. Public Health staff evaluate each case and determine how long isolation is required. They will notify you about when you can stop isolating. Repeat tests are NOT used for this purpose.

Am I now immune to 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.

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.
- Health Canada recommends that the COVID-19 vaccine should not be routinely given while breastfeeding. However, the vaccine may be offered if the benefits of the vaccine outweigh the risks. Talk to your health care provider about whether the COVID-19 vaccine is appropriate for you. Also see https://manitoba.ca/asset_library/en/covid/covid19_vaccine_factsheet.pdf