



FAQs for Pregnant Women & Health Care Providers

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PREGNANCY
WITH
COVID-19

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The Scientific Answers to your common queries on COVID-19 Coronavirus Pandemic & Pregnancy

FAQs for pregnant women and health care providers for various aspects of care in the COVID-19 pandemic such as preventive measures, symptoms, reporting, testing and treatment.

1. What is Coronavirus or COVID -19 ?

Coronavirus disease 2019, or "COVID-19," is an infection caused by a specific virus called SARS-CoV-2. The virus first appeared in late 2019 in the city of Wuhan, China. But it has spread quickly since then, and there are now cases across the world, including Europe, India and the United States. People with COVID-19 infection can have fever, cough, and difficulty with breathing. Problems with breathing happen when the infection affects the lungs and causes pneumonia. Experts are studying this virus and will continue to learn more about it over time. As of April 15, 2020, there were approximately 20 lakhs global cases of COVID-19 infections. Over 4,70,000 people had recovered from the disease, while there had been 1,20,000 deaths. The United States, Italy, and Spain have been the three countries hardest hit by the pandemic.

2. How does it spread ? How does it transmit ?

The understanding of the spread of the Coronavirus or COVID 19 infection is still incomplete. Initially it was thought to be associated with "wet" markets that sold live animals for human consumption as studied in Wuhan, China. The outbreak reached pandemic proportions when person-to-person spread became the main mode of transmission. This is thought to occur mainly via respiratory droplets, resembling the spread of influenza. With droplet transmission, the virus is released in the respiratory secretions when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks. When another person comes into contact with these droplets, he or she can get infected. The droplets can reach an uninfected person directly or if a person touches an infected surface and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth. Droplets typically do not travel more than six feet (about two meters) and do not stay in the air. Given the current uncertainty regarding transmission mechanisms, precautions as would be taken against airborne infections are recommended to prevent spread. From what experts know so far, COVID-19 infection seems to spread most easily when people are showing symptoms of the infection. It is possible to spread it without having symptoms, too, but experts don't know how often this happens.

3. How can I prevent my family and me from getting the corona infection?

The main precautions against getting coronavirus infection are social distancing and hand hygiene. Frequent handwashing with soap and water for 20 seconds, hand sanitization, respiratory hygiene, avoiding touching your face and social distancing have been identified as effective measures to prevent COVID-19 infection. Avoid public transportation. Avoid large gathering.

4. What is hand hygiene? How one should practice hand washing?

Hand washing: Hands should be washed with soap and water often. This is especially important after being in public and touching other people or surfaces. Make sure to rub your hands with soap for at least 20 seconds, cleaning your wrists, fingernails, thumb, and in between your fingers. Then rinse your hands and dry them with a paper towel you can dispose off.

Hand sanitization: If you are not near a sink, you can use a hand sanitizer to clean your hands. The sanitizers with at least 70% alcohol work the best. But it is better to wash with soap and water if you can. Avoid touching your face with your hands, especially your mouth, nose, or eyes. **Please See Figure 1**

5. What is respiratory hygiene?

Respiratory hygiene is a term used to describe infection prevention measures to decrease the risk of spreading respiratory illness like common cold or influenza which result in a runny nose, cough or fever. A respiratory infection is spread when a person who is infected with a virus coughs or sneezes. The droplets released from an infected person's cough or sneeze can travel for several feet reaching the nose or mouth of others and causing illness. Viruses can spread easily from person to person through direct contact via touching or shaking hands. Droplets can also live for a few hours to a few days on a variety of objects in the environment such as bed rails, door knobs, wheelchairs, or patient care equipment where they can be touched by another person. Because some individuals cough without having respiratory infections (e.g., persons with chronic obstructive lung disease) and some



asymptomatic person may be a carrier, we do not always know who is infectious and who is not. Therefore, respiratory hygiene is very important to protect yourself from illness and prevent others from becoming ill. Like hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene is part of the standard precautions that should be taken to prevent the spread of disease. This is also called as cough etiquette.

6. What are the steps for cough etiquette or respiratory hygiene?

1. While coughing or sneezing cover your nose and mouth with a handkerchief or mask
2. Turn away from other people when coughing and sneezing
3. Wear mask if you have cough or runny nose
4. Sneeze or cough in the fold of your elbow if you can't cover your mouth and nose
5. Do not spit anywhere in public places

7. What is social distancing? How can it be helpful ?

Social distancing is a tool that public health officials recommend to slow the spread of a disease that is being passed from person to person. It means that people stay far enough (at least one metre away) from each other so that the coronavirus or any pathogen cannot spread from one person to another. Even if you are healthy, limiting contact with other people can help slow the spread of disease. In general, the recommendation is to cancel or postpone large gatherings such as sports events, concerts, festivals, parades, weddings etc. But even smaller gatherings can be risky and should be avoided.

8. How do we practice social distancing?

Stay away from people who have any symptoms of the infection. Avoid crowds. If you live in an area where there have been cases of COVID-19 infection, try to stay home as much as you can. If possible, work from home. If you do need to be around other people, be sure to wash your hands often and avoid contact when you can. For example, you can avoid handshakes and high fives, and encourage others to do the same.

9. Can we celebrate social cultural programme like 7 months rituals during pregnancy etc?

You can do the rituals with the people with whom you are living. It is important to minimize the chance of exposing oneself to the risk of infection from anyone, even from asymptomatic carrier during the pandemic. There are other modes such as video calls etc through which you can celebrate these rituals innovatively. Health is more important than rituals.

10. Can we travel? How can we travel? Any precautions during the travel.

Avoid travel as far as possible. Do not go to areas which have been identified to have clusters of infection. If you have to travel (for example: for medical care), use a private vehicle if possible. If public transport is unavoidable, take measures to avoid contact with other persons, crowding and touching surfaces. Travel recommendations are changing often.

11. Do I need to wear a mask?

As of now, experts recommend the use of a mask for everybody. Specialized masks are meant for healthcare workers and infected patients. The general public can wear simple masks. now come local authorities have made its compulsory to wear a mask in public.

Please See Figure 2

12. What should I do if I have relative at my home who has come from abroad?

Local health authorities should be informed about the travel itinerary of the visitor. The visitor should be quarantined as per the instructions given by the authorities. The visitor should be aware and report if there are symptoms of infection. If they have been advised to be quarantined at home, strict social distancing needs to be followed. Please remember to be kind and empathic and do not treat infected, exposed or suspicious people as outcasts.

13. What is quarantine and isolation?

The term Quarantine is used to separate and restrict the movement of well persons who are known to be exposed (directly or indirectly) or suspected to be exposed to a communicable disease to see if they become ill. The word is derived from the Italian language – *Quaranta* – which means Forty. In the times of the plague, people were kept separately for 40 days. Isolation refers to the separation and restriction of movements of ill persons who have a contagious disease in order to prevent its transmission to others.



14. What are the symptoms (features) of COVID-19 OR Corona-flu?

Fever, cough, sore throat, difficulty in breathing, tiredness, muscle aches or body ache are the most common symptoms. Some may have headache, runny nose, changed smell sensation, digestive problems such as nausea, diarrhoea and abdominal pain. Rarely atypical presentations such as heart and brain ailments have been reported. Some may have no symptoms and are diagnosed when investigated for something else.

Please See Figure 3

15. When do the symptoms of COVID-19 infection start?

Usually symptoms start by 5 – 7 days from exposure to another infected person (start of infection). A few people may develop symptoms by at 11-12 days. Rarely, the presentation may be as late as 28 days.

16. Who are commonly affected by COVID-19 Infection?

As per the current experience, every individual can get infected with COVID-19 infection. However, the clinical picture and course of the disease is more severe in older age group (>60 years), people with low immunity, diabetes, heart problems or high blood pressure. Pregnant women and children are not more likely to get infected and neither do they have a worse course of infection.

17. Is a pregnant woman more susceptible to corona infection?

No. The chances of getting infection are same as in non-pregnant state. In fact results from China show that they did not get severe disease. It is believed that pregnant women usually move out and travel less and this may protect them to some extent. But at present there is no such study.

18. When will tests for COVID-19 infection be advised for me?

If the Health Care Provider (HCP) suspects COVID-19 infection a swab from your nose or throat will be taken for testing. The rapid diagnostic test, which is a blood test, will also be available soon. Additionally, other laboratory tests with X-ray of the chest or CT scan may be advised by your doctor as per the clinical condition.

19. Is the chance of miscarriage or premature labour higher if one gets coronavirus infection?

No. The chances of miscarriage or premature birth do not increase. At present no evidences suggest an association of miscarriage with Coronavirus.

20. What are infection transmission risks to the foetus and the newborn if a mother gets COVID-19 infection in pregnancy?

At present, direct mother-to-child transmission from a mother's blood has not been identified. It is not found in cord blood or in the placenta. There is no need for any tests (including amniocentesis) to find fetal infection. After delivery, the mother may breastfeed the baby taking proper hand hygiene and respiratory hygiene precautions including wearing a mask.

21. When should I see a doctor or Health Care Provider (HCP)?

If you have any of the above mentioned symptoms or a history of exposure to COVID-19 infected person in the last 14 days or you have travelled from an area which is a cluster of COVID-19 infection, please contact your doctor or healthcare provider. It is best to talk or video-conference with your doctor or HCP first. They can tell you what to do and whether you need to be seen in person and also guide you where to go. Persons with no symptoms or mild symptoms may be asked to stay at home. If your symptoms are severe, you will have to visit the hospital. You should inform of your arrival in advance. This way the staff can care for you while taking steps to protect others. Put on a face mask when you go to the hospital. The staff might ask you to wait in a separate area. Your HCP will do an examination and ask about your symptoms. They will also ask questions about any recent travel and whether you have been around anyone who might be sick. After the evaluation, tests will be advised and further treatment given.



22. What may be the treatment for COVID-19 infection?

There is no specific treatment for COVID-19 infection. Patients with COVID-19 infection may require supportive and symptomatic treatment. Many people will be able to stay at home while they get better, but people with serious symptoms or other health co-morbidities like diabetes, asthma, cardiac diseases etc. might need to go to the hospital.

Mild illness – Most people with COVID-19 infection can rest at home until they get better. People with mild symptoms like fever and cough seem to get better after about 2 weeks, but it's not the same for everyone. If you are recovering, it's important to stay home, and away from other people, until your doctor or nurse tells you it's safe to go back to your normal activities. This decision will depend on how long it has been since you had symptoms, and in some cases, whether you have had two negative tests 48 hours apart (showing that the virus is no longer in your body).

Severe illness – If you have more severe illness with difficulty in breathing, you might need to stay in the hospital, possibly in the intensive care unit (also called the "ICU"). While you are there, you will most likely be in an "isolation" room. Only medical staff will be allowed in the room, and they will have to wear special gowns, gloves, masks, and eye protection. The doctors and nurses can monitor and support your breathing and other body functions and make you as comfortable as possible. You might need oxygen to help you breathe easily. If you are having a very hard time breathing, you might need to be put on a ventilator. This is a machine to help you breathe.

Doctors are studying several different medicines to learn whether they might work to treat COVID-19 infection. In certain cases, doctors might recommend these medicines.

23. How should I contact my hospital if I have labour pain? How should I reach the hospital?

Call your doctor or emergency contact numbers and call for an ambulance. Delivery services and emergency care are available in a lockdown. If you are suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 infection, you should go to designated COVID-19 hospitals or nodal centres. Please wear N 95 mask while going to the hospital, if you are infected with COVID-19. Please call the labour ward or maternity unit before you are reaching so that the team is ready to receive you with the right gear.

24. What should be the preferred mode of delivery?

COVID-19 infection has no effect on route of delivery. Vaginal delivery can be performed unless there is an obstetric indication for caesarean or operative delivery. In situations where the mother has a severely compromised respiratory status, an urgent delivery may be required by caesarean section.

25. Can I plan a pregnancy or start fertility treatments like Assisted Reproduction Treatments (ART)?

If you are trying for a pregnancy, you can take your own decision. Many couples decide to wait for a couple of months till the peak of the COVID-19 outbreak is over. It is better to postpone ART for a few months as you may have to visit your doctor frequently and you may have to undergo procedures in ART which are non-emergency procedures.

26. Can we prescribe MTP pills on phone as there is a lockdown?

MTP medications cannot be prescribed on the phone. Counselling and investigations may be advised telephonically. This will allow a single visit to complete the procedure. You need to visit the facility with due precautions to protect yourself from COVID-19 infection.

27. Should a woman have a dual marker test or a quadruple marker test in the times of the COVID-19 pandemic?

The screening protocol for chromosomal abnormalities does not change in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. The first trimester dual marker test is preferable in general. However, if it is not possible to do this due to the lockdown, a quadruple marker test can be done later at 16 to 19 weeks.

28. What is telemedicine? How does it help me?

Medical advice can be offered through mobile, video consultation, chatting through Apps, prescriptions can be generated and you can connect to your doctor through virtual consultation. Experts can also guide the local HCPs through telemedicine and access can be local to global. It is now officially allowed by the Medical Council of India (MCI) in India from 25th March onwards. Patient can be saved from travel and possible exposure for minor problems or routine visits. Telemedicine may be chargeable service.



29. What are the changes in the antenatal care (ANC) visits during the lockdown or restricted travel policy?

We would like to minimize the number of times that a pregnant woman has to go out of her house. However, there is a minimum level of care that is necessary. For a woman who does not have high risk factors, a sonography is advised at 12-13 weeks and at 18-22 weeks. Pregnancy visits can be timed with these sonographies. The next visit can be at about 32 weeks. Vaccinations and blood investigations can be planned during these visits. Growth scans in the last trimester are advised or performed only if indicated. For women who have high risk factors, the guidance of the HCP is needed.

30. What about vaccines? Does the flu vaccine confer any protection?

Vaccines for Tetanus toxoid or Td Vaccine or TdP vaccine should be taken as per schedule during the minimum Antenatal visits as per the advice from your obstetrician. The flu vaccine available at present will not provide protection against COVID-19 and it will provide protection for swine flu only. There is no vaccine to prevent COVID-19 as yet.

31. Are there any immunity boosters to protect myself from COVID-19 infection?

Good food, food containing vitamin C, antioxidants, exercise, yoga, rest, and social distancing can boost your immunity. Do not take medications by yourself. Do take your recommended prenatal medications prescribed by your obstetrician on time. There is a lot of information available about COVID-19, including rumors about how to avoid it. But not all of this information is accurate. For example, you might have heard that you can lower your risk using a hand dryer, rinsing out your nose with salt water, or taking antibiotics. These things do not work.

32. If someone near me has COVID -19 infection, what should I do?

- Isolate— Keep the infected person away from others. The infected person should stay in a separate room with good ventilation and use a separate bathroom if possible. They should also eat in their own room.
- Use face masks— The infected person should wear a face mask (ideally a FFP3 or FFP2 - N95 mask) when they are in the same room as other people. If you are caring for the infected person, you should also protect yourself by wearing a face mask when you are in the room.
- Wash hands— Wash your hands with soap and water often (see above)
- Clean often— Wear disposable gloves when you clean. It's also a good idea to wear gloves when you have to touch the infected person's laundry, dishes, utensils, or trash. Regularly clean things that are touched a lot. This includes counters, bedside tables, doorknobs, computers, phones, bathroom surfaces etc. Clean things in your home with soap and water, but also use disinfectants on appropriate surfaces. Some cleaning products work well to kill bacteria, but not viruses, so it's important to check labels.

33. What should I do if there is an outbreak in my community?

The best thing you can do to stay healthy is to stay at home, wash your hands regularly, and avoid contact with people who are infected. In addition, to help slow the spread of disease, it's important to follow any official instructions in your area about limiting contact with other people. Even if there are no cases of COVID-19 where you live, that could change in the future. So it is important to stay updated with local official instructions.

34. Why is lockdown practised?

A lockdown is practiced to minimize community transmission of an infection at the times of a pandemic. If businesses, schools, malls, theatres, etc are closed, large numbers of people will not gather at one place. This reduces the chance of the infection spreading. Stay at home as much as possible. Go out of the house as few times as possible and collect all your tasks to be completed in one outing. You may go out for medical needs.

**35. Why do I need to follow the local recommendations of lockdown?**

Rules and guidelines might be different in different areas. If officials do tell people in your area to stay home or avoid gathering with other people, it's important to take this seriously and follow instructions as best you can. Even if you are not at high risk of getting very sick from COVID-19, you could still pass it along to others. Keeping people away from each other is one of the best ways to control the spread of the virus.

36. Do I need to notify to anyone about anything regarding the COVID-19 pandemic?

If you have travelled from any country or an area which is highly affected by COVID-19 infection or if you have any relative/visitor at your home who has travelled from such area who needs quarantine or if you think you were in close contact with someone with COVID-19 infection, you should call your local public health office even if you have no symptoms.

37. How do I be less anxious and stressful in the times of the lockdown and COVID-19 pandemic?

It is normal to feel anxious or worried about the COVID-19 pandemic. You can take care of yourself, and your family:
Take breaks from the news
Exercise regularly at home and eat healthy food
Try to find activities that you enjoy and can do at home
Stay in touch with your friends and family members on phone or social media.
Keep in mind that most people do not get severely ill or die from COVID-19. While it helps to be prepared, and it's important to do what you can do to lower your risk and help slow the spread of the virus, Please do not panic.

38. Can I breast feed my baby if I am suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 infection

Yes. you can breast feed your baby as per advice from your obstetrician and neonatologist your baby as it will help your baby to get proper nutrition and antibodies to protect it from other illnesses. You must follow all the principles of nursing such as respiratory hygiene and hand hygiene when handling the baby as mentioned above.

39. Does my newborn baby require coronavirus test? When?

If you have an active infection or if your baby has any such symptoms or clinical findings, the test for the coronavirus infection is needed. the test shd be done as per advise of your neonatologist and recommendations of the local health authority.

40. What precautions should I take after delivery?

Maintain good hygiene. Be healthy and protect yourself from illness and this will protect your baby too. Practice social distancing. Do not have large celebrations and gatherings for cultural rituals. Meet as few people as possible. follow the local guidelines about the lockdown and other regulatory matters.

41. Can I continue smoking and alcohol? Any side effects?

As such, pregnant women should avoid smoking and alcohol use. In the situation of the coronavirus pandemic, they can reduce your immunity and increase the risk of getting infected.

42. Can coronavirus infection get transmitted by mosquitoes or from fecal matter?

As of now, much information is not available, except a single study. It is always better to practice sanitation hygiene. Transmission by mosquitoes has not been documented.

43. Should any prophylaxis be given for a woman or a HCP in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic?

At present, the ICMR recommends prophylaxis only to asymptomatic healthcare workers caring for suspected or confirmed COVID-19 infected patients. If the HCP is a pregnant woman, she can take the medication. The recommended regimen is to take the tablet of 400 mg hydroxychloroquine twice a day on day 1 and then once weekly for 7 weeks. The medicine should be taken with meals. It is contraindicated in case of known sensitivity to the drug or if there is a history of cardiac problems, G6PD deficiency or retinopathy. The healthcare worker should not fall into a false sense of security when pharmacoprophylaxis is being used and the other preventive measures should be followed. It is better to do an ECG before starting Hydroxychloroquine. At present, there is no recommendation or rationale of giving hydroxychloroquine to all HCPs or to all pregnant women.

**44. What is a quick guide to the PPE that HCP need while working?**

When working in triage area or general clinic, HCP should wear disposable cap, mask and latex gloves.

In a fever clinic or when working with suspect or confirmed COVID-19 cases, N95 mask and face protection (goggles and shield) should be added. While performing deliveries or procedures, full PPE kit with body-covering suit and ideally respiratory protective devices is required.

45. What is the national helpline number for COVID-19 in India?

You can seek help and information about COVID-19 by calling the national helpline number 011-23978046 or 1075. You can also seek help by email on ncov2019@gov.in or on chat on <https://wa.me/919013151515>. Various states also have their own helplines.

46. Which is the App started by GOI for COVID-19? How is it useful?

Aarogya Setu is a mobile application developed by the Government of India to connect essential health services and information about risks, best practices and relevant advisories pertaining to the containment of COVID-19. The app can be downloaded from Google Play Store or AppStore for Apple users.

Please See Figure 4



Figure 1. Hand Hygiene



Novel Coronavirus
Disease
COVID-19

How to handrub?

**RUB HANDS FOR HAND HYGIENE!
WASH HANDS WHEN VISIBLY SOILED**

 **Duration of the entire procedure: 20-30 seconds**



Apply a palmful of the product in a cupped hand, covering all surfaces;



Rub hands palm to palm;



Right palm over left dorsum with interlaced fingers and vice versa;



Palm to palm with fingers interlaced;



Backs of fingers to opposing palms with fingers interlocked;



Rotational rubbing of left thumb clasped in right palm and vice versa;



Rotational rubbing, backwards and forwards with clasped fingers of right hand in left palm and vice versa;



Once dry, your hands are safe.

Stay protected!

Stay safe from Coronavirus!



Contact Ministry of Health and Family Welfare Helpline: **+91-11-23978046 & 1075**

Figure 2. Correct Mask Use



Figure 3. Symptoms of Covid 19 Infection

Novel Coronavirus Disease COVID-19

What is Novel Coronavirus Disease?

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is caused by Novel Coronavirus that leads to cough, fever or difficulty in breathing

Symptoms of COVID-19:



FEVER



COUGH



BREATHING DIFFICULTIES

Take precaution. Protect yourself.

1. When coughing and sneezing, cover mouth and nose with handkerchief or tissue
2. Wash hands with soap and water frequently
3. Keep distance and avoid close contact with anyone with fever, cough or breathing difficulties
4. Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth
5. If you have fever, cough or difficulty in breathing with travel history from Coronavirus affected countries/areas or contact with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 patient, contact your nearest health facility or report the helpline number

Stay protected!

Stay safe from Coronavirus!



Contact Ministry of Health and Family Welfare Helpline:
+91-11-23978046 & 1075



Figure 4. Aarogya Setu App



Aarogya Setu

NIC eGov Mobile Apps Health & Fitness

★★★★★ 260,610

3+

This app is compatible with some of your devices.

Add to wishlist

Install

