



Interim Guidance for People Who Are Pregnant or Caring for Others Who Are Pregnant During the COVID-19 Pandemic

April 24, 2020

AUDIENCE: The following interim guidance was developed by the San Francisco Department of Public Health for use by people who are pregnant and their caretakers.

BACKGROUND:

Novel coronavirus disease, or COVID-19, is a new respiratory disease that can spread from person to person. Most people who get the infection have no symptoms or mild symptoms of a cold. Some people have gotten very sick from it and need to be hospitalized – especially people who are older and have chronic medical conditions. The most common signs and symptoms of infection include fever, cough, difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscles aches, sore throat, and headache. Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea are less-common symptoms of COVID-19. At present, there is no vaccine to prevent COVID-19 and no treatment after someone has been exposed to COVID-19. The best way to prevent the spread of the virus is to avoid being exposed to the virus.

Based on available information, **pregnant people seem to have the same risk as adults who are not pregnant.** However, we do know that

- Pregnant people have changes in their bodies that may increase their risk of some infections.
- Pregnant people have had a higher risk of severe illness when infected with viruses from the same family as COVID-19 and other viral respiratory infections, such as influenza.

Evidence surrounding best practices for management of pregnant patients is continuing to evolve. It is always important for pregnant women to protect themselves from illnesses.

GUIDANCE FOR PREGNANT PEOPLE IN SAN FRANCISCO:

Stay home as much as possible and minimize your exposure to COVID-19

- Practice social distancing with anyone that you do not live with (maintain at least 6 feet of separation).
- Stay home if you are sick.
- If you are an essential employee and must continue working, ask about teleworking.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after you have been in a public place or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- Use masks or cloth face coverings over the face and mouth when going outside for essential activities, or when in close proximity (within 6 feet) to people who are not a part of your household. Face coverings can be made of a variety of cloth materials, such as bandanas, scarves, t-shirts, sweatshirts or towels. Cloth face coverings should not be placed on young children under age 2. The cloth face cover is not a substitute for social distancing -- continue to keep 6 feet between yourself and others.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily. This includes tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets and sinks. If surfaces are dirty, use detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection. Then, use a household disinfectant.



- If someone you live with has confirmed or suspected COVID-19, contact their health provider and keep the entire household at home. For newborns under 2 months with fever, call urgently.

Call a provider if you have symptoms of cold or flu

- If you have symptoms of cold or flu, including fever, cough or shortness of breath, call your provider. Your provider will decide whether you should be tested for COVID-19.
- If you develop emergency warning signs such as trouble breathing, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, new confusion or inability to arouse, bluish lips or face, or any other symptoms that are severe or concerning, seek medical attention immediately. Notify the 911 operator or call ahead to notify the hospital that you have or think you might have COVID-19. If possible, put on a facemask before medical help arrives or before arriving at the hospital.
- If you have COVID-19 symptoms at the time of labor, you will need to deliver in the hospital. Call ahead so that the team will be ready to best care for you and can limit the spread of the virus to other people, including your baby.

Talk to your provider about your prenatal schedule

- For your safety, it is important that you continue to receive all of your essential prenatal care.
- In an effort to limit your risk of exposure to COVID-19, many providers are limiting in-person prenatal visits to those that are most essential and must be done in person (essential visits include the initial prenatal visit, anatomy ultrasound, visits where labs are done, etc.). Vaccinations and glucose screenings may be grouped together in one visit. Routine follow-up and surveillance may be given over the phone.
- If you receive virtual prenatal care, you should be supported in using fetal kick counts or home doppler devices if available – along with blood pressure cuffs, scales, and mailed or online health education resources -- in conjunction with your virtual visit.
- Call your provider to determine what prenatal visit schedule is safest for you.

Adjust your birth plan

- Speak with your provider to determine how best to be in communication with your obstetric care team, especially in the case of an emergency.
- To keep everyone safe, many hospitals are limiting the number of visitors that are allowed in the labor and delivery unit. This will be specific based on your delivery location and is subject to change. Many home and birth-center midwives are also adjusting their delivery policies to increase safety during the COVID-19 outbreak. Speak with your provider to learn how many people can attend your delivery and ask for their help to adjust your birth plan accordingly.
- Bring everything you need for the entire time you will be in the hospital, including clothes and food, with you. Hospitals may be limiting when your support person can return back to your delivery room once labor starts.

Reach out for support for relationship or parenting stress

- The way that we are treated in our relationships affects our health and our pregnancy. During this COVID19 pandemic, pregnant people and their families may experience more stress in their relationships including increased fighting, or even, severe harm. There is help available.
 - Call the National Domestic Violence (DV) Hotline: 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) or for Deaf or Hard of Hearing call: TTY 1-800-787-3224.
 - If your partner or someone else is putting you down, hurting you, threatening you or making you feel afraid, please call a local DV hotline or the national DV hotline (1-800-799-SAFE (7233)) and reach out to your healthcare provider.



- If it is safer for you to leave home to call, you can go for a walk (while staying 6 ft away from others), call from your car, or make a call while grocery shopping. You can also meet a friend (while 6 ft apart) to help you make calls to supportive people.
- A list of all San Francisco resources for Interpersonal and Family Violence can be found at: www.leapsf.org.
- If you need parenting support or are worried about how stress in your family is affecting your children, please call the 24-Hour TALK Line at (415) 441-KIDS (5437) at Safe and Sound.
- Speak with your healthcare provider if you are experiencing anxiety or hardship regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. This may include financial concerns as well as concerns about changes to your postpartum care team, childcare options, and support system. They can provide support, connect you with available community support resources, and offer referrals on a case-by-case basis.

Considering a Homebirth?

- Every pregnant person has the right to make an informed decision about their birth plan. Speak with your provider about the relative risks and benefits of a homebirth.
- If you are wondering if you qualify for a homebirth, speak with your provider. Home births may be considered if:
 - 1) the pregnant person is healthy, and the pregnancy is low risk
 - 2) a certified home birth provider is available
 - 3) safe and timely transport to nearby hospitals is accessible
 - 4) there is ready access to consultation
- In California, fetal malpresentation (such as breech presentation) and pregnancy with more than one baby at a time, are reasons that you should not have a planned home birth. If you are considering a home birth service, your pregnancy provider will help you assess on an individual basis if it is safe for you to use home birth services.
- If you have symptoms of cold or flu, you should plan to deliver in the hospital. Call ahead to inform the hospital of your symptoms before arriving to keep you and the care team safe.
- Qualified homebirth providers can be found at San Francisco homebirth collective: sanfranciscohomebirthcollective.org

Although recognizing that many patients are experiencing new concerns because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology continues to recommend following existing evidence-based guidance regarding home birth.

For more information:

[CDC Guidance on Pregnancy and Breastfeeding](#)

[Voices for Birth Justice- COVID-19 Resources](#)

[March of Dimes- Coronavirus Disease: What you need to know about its impact on moms and babies](#)

[Look to end abuse permanently \(LEAP\)](#)– List of San Francisco Interpersonal Violence Resources

[National DV Hotline](#)

[Safe and Sound 24 Hour Talkline for Parents](#)