

Giving Birth During the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic

Frequently Asked Questions:

Birth and Labour



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Coronavirus disease, also known as Covid-19, has quickly become a worldwide pandemic. During this time, it is likely that pregnant women are feeling anxious or worried about how Covid-19 may affect them and their baby during their pregnancy journey.

This information sheet has been developed with the Midlands Maternity and Perinatal Mental Health Clinical Network and Maternity Voices Partnerships, to help support you with any concerns you may have during this uncertain time. It is important to remember to always follow the guidance and advice given to you by your health care professional.

Please be aware that some of the questions and answers below have informed by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologist website. For the full and most recent response please visit: <https://www.rcog.org.uk/en/guidelines-research-services/guidelines/coronavirus-pregnancy/covid-19-virus-infection-and-pregnancy/>

Q. Should I still think differently when making labour and birth plans during the pandemic?

When making any plans around labour and birth, it is important to speak to your midwife to discuss the options available and the benefits and risk of those options. They will also be able to give you the most up to date guidance and support you to achieve the most positive birth experience.

Q. Will a home births or a midwifery-led unit still be an option?

Maternity units are working hard during this time to support women and the choices available to them when giving birth. As all areas of the NHS are affected by coronavirus, the priority for maternity services will be the safety of you and your baby. Both of these

options will be available if your Trusts are confident that they have a safe amount of staffing in place, and access to rapid transfer to hospital, if needed.

Q. Will being in self-isolation for suspected or confirmed coronavirus, affect where or how I give birth?

As a precaution, pregnant women with suspected or confirmed coronavirus when they go into labour, are being advised to go to an obstetric unit for birth, where you and your baby can be monitored more closely.

There is currently no evidence to suggest you cannot give birth vaginally or that you would be safer having a caesarean birth if you have suspected or confirmed coronavirus. Your birth choices should be respected and followed as closely as possible, based on your wishes.

However, if you are unwell and your team feel that this suggests that your baby needs to be born urgently, a caesarean birth may be recommended.

It is not recommended that you give birth in a birthing pool in hospital if you have suspected or confirmed coronavirus, as the virus can sometimes be found in faeces. This means it could contaminate the water, causing infection to pass to the baby. It may also be more difficult for healthcare staff to use adequate protection equipment during a water birth.

Q. Will I be able to stay with my baby/give skin-to-skin, if I have suspected or confirmed coronavirus?

Yes, if that is your choice. If you and your baby are well and do not require any special care, you will stay together after you have given birth.

Q. Will I be able to breastfeed my baby if I have suspected or confirmed coronavirus?

Yes. There is no evidence showing that the virus can be carried or passed on in breastmilk. The well-recognised benefits of breastfeeding and the protection it offers to babies outweigh any potential risks of transmission of coronavirus through breastmilk.

The main risk of breastfeeding is close contact between you and your baby. If you cough or sneeze, this could contain droplets which are infected with the virus, leading to infection of the baby after birth.

A discussion about the risks and benefits of breastfeeding should take place between you and your family and your maternity team. This guidance may change as knowledge evolves.

When you or anyone else feeds your baby, the following precautions are recommended:

- Wash your hands before touching your baby, breast pump or bottles
- Try to avoid coughing or sneezing on your baby while feeding at the breast
- Consider wearing a face mask while breastfeeding, if available
- Follow recommendations for pump cleaning after each use
- Consider asking someone who is well, to feed your expressed breast milk to your baby.

If you choose to feed your baby with formula or expressed milk, it is recommend that you follow strict adherence to [sterilisation guidelines](#). If you are expressing breast milk in hospital, a dedicated breast pump should be used.

There are also a number of organisations that offer breast feeding advice and guidance:

La Leche League GB - <https://www.laleche.org.uk/>

Breastfeeding Network - <https://www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/>

Association of Breastfeeding Mothers - <https://abm.me.uk/>