

COVID-19 in pregnancy

patient information

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID- 19) is a disease caused by a virus called SARS-CoV-2. Common symptoms include cough, sore throat, feeling tired, but some may experience serious symptoms like shortness of breath or chest pain. The chance of giving birth before term (less than 37 weeks) is increased for women who develop severe illness. For most women, COVID-19 will be a mild flu-like illness and it won't cause problems to you, especially when you have been vaccinated.

I have tested positive to COVID-19, what should I do?

1. DO NOT ATTEND YOUR ANTENATAL APPOINTMENTS. Call the outpatient hotline and leave your message (including your name, HKID number, phone number, and the date of your positive covid test). Our staff will call you back for appropriate arrangement.
2. If you have **red flag symptoms** (see the next section), please attend the Accident and Emergency Department

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

- No symptoms
- Mild symptoms
 - Fever
 - Chills or sweats
 - Cough
 - Feeling tired
 - Muscle/ Joint pain
 - Headache
 - Sore throat
 - Runny nose

- Loss or change in sense of smell or taste
- Loss of appetite
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea

Red flag symptoms

- Persistent fever $>38.5^{\circ}\text{C}$ for >2 days despite antipyretics
- Hypothermia $\leq 35^{\circ}\text{C}$
- Convulsion
- Difficult breathing
- Loss of speech or mobility
- Inability to wake or stay awake
- Pain or pressure over the chest or abdomen
- Dizziness or confusion or marked change in mental status
- Weakness or unsteadiness
- Decreased or no movement of fetus (for pregnant women ≥ 24 weeks of gestation)
- Persistent (≥ 2 days) inability to drink or eat / diarrhea & vomiting

Attend the Accident and Emergency Department if you have any red flag symptoms, or feel generally unwell.

Who are at increased risk of severe disease or complications?

- Unvaccinated or incompletely vaccinated
- Obese (BMI > 30 kg/m²)
- Age > 35 years old
- Having other medical conditions e.g. pre- pregnant diabetes, heart or lung diseases, or immunosuppressed
- At later gestation (after 26 weeks of gestation)

How should I monitor my symptoms?

Keep a diary and note the following symptoms

1. Breathing
 - i. Any shortness of breath?
 - ii. How many times you breathe in and out in 1 minute? (respiratory rate)

See doctor if you feel shortness of breath or if your respiratory rate is increasing or >20/min.

2. Heart rate
 - i. Feel your pulse by placing your fingers lightly on your wrist and count the number of beats per minute

See doctor if your heart rate is >100/min

3. Temperature
 - i. Check your temperature at least once daily.

See doctor if your temperature is persistently >38.5°C despite Panadol.

Will I pass COVID-19 to my baby?

It is uncommon.

How can I manage my symptoms?

- Drink lots of fluids to keep yourself hydrated
- Take rest, but avoid complete bed rest in view of increased risk of forming blood clots in the vessels (thromboembolism) in pregnant population
- Have a balanced diet
- It is safe to take paracetamol for fever, headaches or muscle aches
- It is safe to continue with multivitamins
- DO NOT TAKE any other medications unless they have been prescribed by a doctor.

What happens if I give birth while having an active COVID-19 infection?

You will need to deliver in place with isolation facilities. In most situations, the mode of delivery will not be affected by your COVID-19 infection status. Paediatrician will closely monitor your baby for any infection immediately after delivery. Therefore, you would likely be separated from your baby after delivery. Since pregnancy increases the risk of thromboembolism, you will receive low molecular weight heparin (LMWH) injection during your hospital stay unless contraindicated.

Can I breastfeed my baby?

Breastfeeding is recommended since its benefits substantially outweigh the potential risks for transmission. It is unlikely that COVID-19 would be transmitted through breastfeeding. You can still feed your baby by expressing the breastmilk in case your baby is still under monitoring in the neonatal ward.

Where can I find more information?

The Hong Kong College of Obstetricians & Gynaecologists has issued advice regarding COVID-19. The information could be found at https://www.hkcog.org/hk/hkcog/news_4_65.html

Center of Health Protection, Department of Health of Hong Kong SAR

<https://www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/index.html>

If your result is preliminarily positive, refer to https://www.coronavirus.gov.hk/pdf/healthadvice_tstpos_ENG.pdf for health advice

If you are pending admission to Hospitals or isolation facilities, refer to

<https://www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/pending-admission.html> for details

The Royal College of Obstetricians & Gynaecologists has issued guidelines and patient information for reference. (Please note that some practices in Hong Kong are different)

<https://www.rcog.org.uk/en/guidelines-research-services/coronavirus-covid-19-pregnancy-and-womens-health/>