

Having a baby when you have or suspect you have COVID-19

Information for you and your baby while you are in the hospital and for going home

The Ottawa Hospital has taken all possible precautions to create a safe and supportive environment for families having a baby during the COVID-19 pandemic.

How is COVID-19 Spread?

Covid-19 virus is usually spread when respiratory droplets of an infected person contact the mouth, nose, or eyes of another person. This can happen if you are less than 6 feet apart for more than a few minutes with an infected person.

Babies may be infected after birth if they are in contact with an infected person. This means that anyone who has COVID-19 can spread it to the baby when providing care. It is safest to stay 6 feet away from your baby when not caring for or feeding the baby.

Once you are home, it is best to limit contact to members of your immediate household until you have completed the self-isolation recommended by Ottawa Public Health.

COVID-19 and Breastfeeding:

- Breastmilk is the best source of nutrition for infants
- As of now, studies say that COVID-19 is not frequently passed through breastmilk
- Wash hands and breasts carefully with soap and water before breast feeding, expressing milk, or pumping your breasts

Should you care for your baby, or choose an alternate healthy caregiver?

Newborns have immature immune systems which makes them at a higher risk of serious respiratory viral infections. There is some evidence that infants can suffer severe or life-threatening illness with COVID-19.

You are welcome to have a healthy support person stay with you in hospital. A healthy support person is a non-exposed caregiver friend or family member, chosen by you. This person would replace your partner/significant other. Your support person **must always stay in your room and always wear personal protective equipment.**

Support person or alternate caregiver should bring:

- Clothing, and other necessary personal items
- Food, drinks, and snacks
- Toiletries
- Medications
- Car seat

When providing care to baby, please use the following safety steps:

- Before touching your baby, you should wash your hands very well with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Avoid touching your face when holding or caring for your baby
- You should always wear a surgical mask:
 - When touching your baby
 - When the baby is less than 6 feet from your face

- You are welcome to breast feed your baby, or your expressed breast milk or formula can be provided to your baby by the caregiver.

Temporary separation:

- If you are **unwell from COVID-19 illness**, your baby may be cared for in the SCN/NICU nursery
- Your expressed breast milk or formula will be provided to the baby by the nurse

Discharge Considerations:

- You will be discharged at the same time as your baby
- Please follow the same **safety steps** as above
- Please purchase medical masks to use at home
- You should follow safety steps until you have completed the isolation period as recommended by Ottawa Public Health. **This could be about 10 days or longer**
- Your initial maternal/newborn follow up will be scheduled at the Monarch C19 clinic at TOH