

## Information for expecting mothers

*Updated March 31, 2021. Subject to change.*

Hospitals may have different recommendations/requirements based on the amount of COVID-19 activity in your area, the impact on staffing, the supply of PPE and many other factors that need to be taken in to consideration in order to keep women, their babies and the staff safe. Please check your local hospitals website for more information and/or ask your care provider.

Most pregnant women who are not infected by COVID-19 are still having normal deliveries, however, the experience of coming to the hospital to deliver or for your appointments has changed for the protection of our patients and our staff.

Whether you are infected with COVID-19 or not, our nurses, midwives and physicians will do everything possible to care for you to achieve a normal delivery.

### **How can I protect myself from COVID-19 while I'm pregnant?**

Pregnant mothers should follow the same advice as everyone else – washing hands often with soap and water or using alcohol-based hand sanitizer, practicing social distancing, wearing a mask in public places and avoid touching your face.

### **Should I get the COVID-19 vaccine?**

There is limited evidence about the potential harm associated with getting the COVID-19 vaccine while pregnant, however, the risk of complications from becoming infected with COVID-19 while pregnant far outweigh any perceived risk associated with vaccination. It's important that someone who is pregnant or breastfeeding have a discussion with a health care provider who is familiar with their pregnancy about the risks and benefits of the COVID-19 vaccine.

### **What should I do if I think I have COVID-19 and I am pregnant?**

If you are pregnant and showing symptoms (cough, new onset shortness of breath, fever), have travelled in the last 14 days or have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, don't hesitate to use a self-assessment tool (<https://covid-19.ontario.ca/self-assessment/#q0>), visit the Community Assessment Centre or contact your local Public Health Unit (<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/>).

### **Can I still take a prenatal tour?**

All hospitals, including KGH, have suspended all in-person prenatal tours for the time being. Please download the *Having a Baby at KHSC* booklet (<https://kingstonhsc.ca/obstetrical-care/having-your-baby-kgh>) for more information.

### **What will my prenatal care be like during the COVID-19 pandemic?**

Regardless of who looks after you during the pregnancy, maternity care is essential. The frequency and process of maternity care has been developed over many decades in order to reduce and/or early identification of complications in the mother or the baby. Whatever your personal situation please consider the following:

- It is important that you keep in contact with your maternity care provider and continue clinic and virtual (telephone) check-ups.
- If you have symptoms of COVID-19, please inform your care provider and they will identify where to go for testing and arrange the right time and place for your clinical visits.
- There may be a reduction in the number of actual clinic or phone visits that you have. This will be communicated with you and will be done as safely as possible. If you are not sure of your next appointment, contact your care provider to sort that out.

### **Is it still safe to come to the hospital to have my baby?**

Yes, it is still safe to come to the hospital to have your baby. We have taken many steps to protect all of patients in the hospital, including mothers and babies, and staff. All patients, support people and hospital staff are screened and asked to use hand sanitizer and wear a mask when they enter the hospital.

If you are showing symptoms (cough, new onset shortness of breath, fever) or have tested positive for COVID-19, call ahead to inform us. Patients who test positive or are awaiting test results will be asked to wear a mask throughout their stay including during their labour and delivery.

### **Is it safe to come to my ultrasound or clinic appointments?**

Yes, it is still safe to come to KGH for your appointments. We have made an effort to triage and reschedule, or offer clinic appointments virtually or by phone whenever possible. If your appointment has not been rescheduled, you can still attend as you normally would as we still need to periodically check your blood pressure, measure the size of your uterus and listen to baby's heartbeat.

When you come to the clinic for an appointment or fetal assessment unit for an ultrasound, you should use the hand sanitizer prior to entering. When you leave the room and when you leave the hospital you should once again be using the hand sanitizer provided. We thoroughly wipe down the beds and equipment (ie: Ultrasound probes, fetal dopplers, etc) after each visit.

Support people are not allowed to accompany patients during any outpatient visit during the pandemic. This includes the Armstrong 5 Obstetrical Clinic, Fetal Assessment Unit, and the Labour & Delivery floor prior to a patient being admitted for labour. (eg:

**Can I still bring a support person to my delivery? Can this person stay overnight in the hospital with me?**

Labouring mothers are permitted to bring one support partner with them for the delivery and to stay with them as long as they are in the hospital. This person **must** pass the screening at the main entrance, meaning they must not be showing any symptoms (cough, fever, new onset shortness of breath) and have no recent travel history. It is very important to answer these questions honestly in order to help protect other women and their babies and our staff.

Support people who screen positive will **not** be allowed in to the hospital. It is **extremely** important to not lie about your symptoms at screening; you would put other women, babies and staff at risk.

These recommendations may change if you are infected by COVID-19 and/or we have a significant increase in activity of the infection in our community requiring us to take more precautions for all patients and staff. These decisions are extremely difficult to make but if needed, are made to protect the most people possible.

### **Can I bring my midwife or doula with me?**

Midwives are registered members of the care team and are not considered visitors. If you are under the care of a midwife, you may still bring one support person to the hospital with you.

If you are seeking support from a doula you are welcome to bring them as your support person, but remember they will be the only support person you are permitted during your stay. Your support person cannot tag-team with someone else either during labour or postpartum on the ward; only **one** support person is allowed during your **entire** stay in the hospital.

### **Will I need to wear a mask during my labour and delivery?**

It is recommended that all inpatients wear a mask during their time in the hospital. We understand this may not be realistic for a labouring mother, so we are encouraging these patients wear their mask until they reach a point where they are no longer comfortable labouring with a mask on.

All of the care providers supporting labouring mothers are wearing full Personal Protective Equipment, so there is no risk to them or the patient if the patient stops wearing their mask. After delivery, and when it is safe to do so, mothers are asked to re-don their mask for the remainder of their stay.

### **What if I need a cesarean section (C-section)?**

Patients that require a cesarean section will proceed as normal. Support persons will be able to accompany patients into the Operating Room as per regular processes. However, a patient that is suspected or positive for COVID-19 may not have a support person in the Operating Room.

### **What if I need to be induced?**

There is no change to inductions.

### **What pain therapies are available?**

Patients are allowed to use the tubs or showers on Labour & Delivery for

We will be resuming use of Nitrous Oxide as an option for pain control shortly. If you are interested, we advise that you speak to your care team to discuss which of these options are best for you.

**For more information about COVID-19 at KHSC Kingston General Hospital site, visit [www.kingstonHSC.ca/COVID-19](http://www.kingstonHSC.ca/COVID-19).**

**For other hospitals, please check their website for hospital specific practices.**