



## COVID-19 alert level 2

### Information for pregnant women and whānau: updated 21 August 2020

**This information is subject to change according to Ministry of Health updates.**

## General Information about COVID-19

### What effect does COVID-19 have on pregnant women?

Pregnant women do not appear to be more severely unwell than the general population if they develop COVID-19. As this is a newly-discovered virus, how it may affect a pregnant woman is not yet clear. It is expected that most pregnant women who contract COVID-19 will experience only mild or moderate cold/flu like symptoms. More severe symptoms such as pneumonia appear to be more common in older people, those with weakened immune systems or long-term conditions.

Pregnant women are more vulnerable to getting infections than a woman who is not pregnant. If a person has an underlying condition, such as hypertension or diabetes, they may become more unwell if they have COVID-19. Based on the evidence we have so far, pregnant women are still no more likely to contract COVID-19 than the general population. What we do know is that in a small number of women, pregnancy can alter how a woman's body reacts to severe viral infections. This is something that midwives and obstetricians have known for many years and are used to dealing with. As yet, there is no evidence that pregnant women who get this infection are more at risk of serious complications than any other healthy individuals.

The symptoms of COVID-19 are one or more of the following:

- a cough
- a high temperature (at least 38°C)
- shortness of breath.
- sore throat
- sneezing and runny nose
- temporary loss of smell

These symptoms do not necessarily mean you have COVID-19. The symptoms are similar to other illnesses that are much more common, such as cold and flu.

If a pregnant woman develops more severe symptoms or recovery is delayed this may be a sign that a more significant chest infection is developing that requires enhanced care, and our advice remains that if a pregnant woman is unwell and feels her symptoms are worsening or not getting better, it is important to contact Healthline on [0800 358 5453](tel:08003585453) or your GP for further information and advice. Then advise your LMC midwife of your situation.



### What effect could COVID-19 have on a baby if a pregnant woman is diagnosed with the infection?

As this is a very new virus we are just beginning to learn about it. There is no evidence to suggest an increased risk of miscarriage. There is also no evidence that the virus can pass to a developing baby while a woman is pregnant (this is called vertical transmission). It is also therefore considered unlikely that if a woman has the virus it would cause abnormalities in her baby and none have been observed currently.

Some babies born to women with symptoms of COVID-19 in China have been born prematurely. It is unclear whether COVID-19 caused this or the doctors made the decision for the baby to be born early because the woman was unwell. As we learn about the risk of pre-term birth and COVID-19 infection, we will update this information.

### What can I do to reduce my risk of catching COVID-19?

The most important thing to do is to wash your hands regularly and effectively as soon as you come from public places to your home or workplace, and continue to maintain physical distancing of 1-2m with people outside your home. There is useful advice on the on the best way to reduce any infection risk, not just for COVID-19, but for other things like colds and flu. You can find information from the Ministry of Health on measures to reduce risk [here](#).

### What is social/physical distancing?

Physical distancing measures, also called social distancing, are steps you can take to reduce the possibility of viral transmission across the space between people.

You need to:

- Keep a 2 metre distance from others in public and in retail stores, like supermarkets and clothes shops.
- Keep a 1 metre distance in most other environments like workplaces, cafes, restaurants, and gyms.
- Avoid contact with someone who is displaying symptoms of COVID-19 (and any cold and flu symptoms).

See the government's COVID-19 [Alert level 2 general information](#) and the [Ministry of Health information for pregnant women](#).

### Can I still work?

The Ministry of Health advises that pregnant women can return to work but you should discuss and agree with your employer a plan to ensure you're able to do your job safely, particularly during your third trimester. It is recommended that women in their third trimester not work where there is a high risk of being exposed to COVID-19, such as some healthcare settings.