

COVID-19 Alert level 4

Information for pregnant women and whānau: 30 March 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 the large majority of pregnant women 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 asthma 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 pregnancy in a small proportion of women can alter how a woman's body handles 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.

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) 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. 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 personal hygiene measures [here](#). Staying at home and observing the requirements of Alert Level 4 physical distancing is also important.

What is social/physical distancing?

Social distancing measures, also called physical distancing, are steps you can take to reduce the social interaction between people. This will help reduce the transmission of COVID-19 (COVID-19).

You need to:

- Stay at home unless you are providing an essential service.
- Stay in your 'bubble'. Avoid gatherings with friends and family. Keep in touch using remote technology such as phone, internet, and social media
- Use telephone or online services to contact your midwife, GP or other essential health services
- Avoid contact with someone who is displaying symptoms of COVID-19 (COVID-19). These symptoms include high temperature and/or new and continuous cough

This advice is likely to be in place for some weeks.

Can I still work?

If you are able to work from home then you can continue to work. Only those providing essential services should leave the house to go to work. Each woman should consider and discuss her specific situation with her employer.