



## Frequently Asked Questions for Expectant Mothers During COVID-19

**What effect does COVID-19 have on pregnant women, breastfeeding and caring for newborns? Is the COVID vaccine safe during my pregnancy and while breastfeeding?**

Please refer to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website: <https://www.cpsso.on.ca/>

**What effect will COVID-19 have on my baby if I am diagnosed?**

Based on the information we know to date and other respiratory viral infections (influenza, SARS, MERS), there may be an association with low birth weight and preterm birth in the case of severe maternal illness.

**Why do I need to have a COVID-19 test before I have my baby?**

During this time of low COVID-19 prevalence in Sarnia-Lambton, only symptomatic individuals being admitted to Maternal Infant Child Unit (MIC) will be tested for COVID-19.

### Hospital Visitor Restrictions

**What are the visiting restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic?**

Please note our policies are subject to change at any time. We will make every effort to keep you informed and ensure your healthcare team will take good care of you and your baby.

- Maternal Infant Child patients in Labour, Special Care Nursery, Pediatrics and Postpartum may have **FOUR** designated care partners; only **TWO** care partners may visit at the same time. These care partners may come and go, but we ask for the number of times to be limited as much as possible
- If the patient has a **PENDING or POSITIVE COVID-19** swab, then visitors are unable to come/go from the hospital **until** the swab result is back and/or is negative.
- **No** children under 18 years of age will be permitted unless they are the patient;
- For outpatients coming to the Maternal Infant Child Unit, a care partner may come with you to assist if needed, however the size of our waiting areas and assessment rooms make physical distancing challenging, so we ask for this to be limited.

**What if I smoke?**

- We are asking patients to limit the number of times they exit/enter the facility. There also must be another Care Partner present who can care for your infant when you leave the unit. If your COVID swab is pending or you are COVID-positive, you will not be able to leave the unit, and we encourage you to speak to your care provider about ordering a nicotine patch for you.

### **What are the infection control changes to visiting in the Special Care Nursery?**

- Care partners who enter the hospital will be required to wear personal protective equipment (gown and mask) and ensure good hand hygiene when caring for their baby. When entering Bluewater Health you will be screened and given a hospital mask. When arriving to the unit please ring to enter.
- Upon entry to the Special Care Nursery you will be required to wash your hands and a nurse will provide you a gown.
- The care partners **MUST NOT** be COVID-19 positive or have any symptoms (the screening questions asked at the hospital entrance will address current symptoms).
- Infants in the nursery are allowed **FOUR** care partners, but only **TWO** care partners may visit at a time in their designated care space in the nursery.
- If you are discharged before your infant is discharged from the nursery, **TWO** care partners will still be allowed to be at the bedside to visit together. If you are fully vaccinated you may leave the hospital and return, if you are not vaccinated you may visit once per day.

We recognize how stressful this can be for new parents, and we will maintain frequent communication with you if you are not permitted to visit. Virtual visits can be scheduled by contacting the Patient Experience office at 519-464-4436 or email <https://www.bluewaterhealth.ca/form/virtual-visit-requestform>

### **Prenatal Information**

#### **Can I still attend my antenatal (prenatal) appointments?**

- Regardless of whether you have symptoms, it is possible you will have fewer appointments based on new guidelines for prenatal care during COVID -19. This is to reduce the risk to you and your baby. You can be assured each pregnancy will be reviewed individually and that the safety of all of our patients is our priority.
- You will be screened at the entrance of Bluewater Health and on admission to the Maternal Infant Child unit.
- At this time, we are still asking to limit having someone accompany you during your appointment visit. No children permitted on unit, unless they are the patient. The size of our waiting areas and assessment rooms make physical distancing challenging.
- For some situations, a support person will be asked to wait in their car or go home and come back. They will be contacted by cell phone during your appointment if they are needed.
- If you need your support person to help with accessibility, please let us know so we can try our best to accommodate.

### **Birthing and Postpartum Information**

#### **What happens when I come into the hospital for any obstetrical care?**

- When entering the hospital at Bluewater Health, you will be screened for symptoms.
  - If you are coming for a booked procedure, such as a Cesarean-section, you will receive a prescreening phone call and further directions.
  - If you are over 20 weeks and arriving in labour, or have concerns such as bleeding or reduced fetal movement, you will also be screened at the hospital entrance and then proceed directly to Maternal Infant Child Triage on Level 3, Norman Building. You will be screened again on admission.
- Your care team may wear gloves, gowns and face masks while providing your care.

- If you have symptoms of, or are confirmed for COVID-19:
  - You will be asked to wash your hands and put on a mask. You will be directed to the appropriate location for further assessment.
  - You will need to have a COVID-19 test done. Your booked procedure will NOT be cancelled but possibly delayed until we have the test result so we can care for you safely.

**How will my baby be cared for in the hospital if I have suspected or confirmed COVID-19?**

- Your baby will be tested during your stay using a nasal pharyngeal swab if you tested positive for COVID-19.
- You will be provided information on how to care for your baby during this time.
- You will also be asked to wear a mask for all infant contact. Ensure you wash your hands frequently, but also before and after touching your baby.
- If your baby is admitted to the Special Care Nursery and you are COVID-19 positive, we will discuss your situation with Infection Control, in an effort to protect your baby as well as the other infants there.

**Can I breastfeed and do “skin to skin” with my baby if I am COVID-19 positive?**

- Keeping your baby “skin to skin” and breastfeeding is encouraged, but you will be asked to wear a mask at these times and during any infant care activities. If you are breastfeeding you will have to wash your hands, breasts and abdomen with warm soapy water prior to feeding.
- If expressing breast milk with a manual or electric breast pump, you should wash your hands before touching any pump or bottle parts and follow recommendations for proper pump cleaning after each use.
- If possible, consider having someone who is asymptomatic care for and feed the expressed breast milk to your baby.

**Returning to Hospital**

If you have to return to hospital for further testing for you or your baby:

- If you are returning for a point of care test such as a Bilirubin Test appointment with baby, please arrive with your baby in stroller as a partner/visitor will not be permitted. At this time, no one can accompany you during your appointment visit. The size of our waiting areas and assessment rooms make physical distancing challenging.
- You must asymptomatic to return for the follow-up visit, otherwise your infant should come for the appointment with another identified designated care provider who is asymptomatic.