



## 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 CDC website:

<https://www.cpso.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 increased COVID-19 prevalence in Sarnia-Lambton, all patients being admitted to Maternal Infant Child (MIC) will be tested for COVID-19 five days prior to their scheduled procedure, or at 39 weeks and every five days thereafter until delivery for labour patients, or on admission to the unit. This will allow results to be available on admission for the best care decisions to be made.

### 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, Paediatrics and Postpartum may have TWO designated care partners. The two care partners may not visit at the same time.
- The care partner visiting will be allowed to leave the hospital once daily and can return again the same day. In and out access during each visit to the hospital is very limited for all patients.
- 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 is not able to be with you at this time. The size of our waiting areas and assessment rooms make physical distancing challenging.

**What if I smoke?**

- Currently in and out privileges are being held to a minimum but we can allow patients and caregivers to go outside to smoke. If these permissions change at any time we are able to offer

patient's that smoke a nicotine patch during your admission as in an out privileges could be restricted. Please speak to the pre-admit nurse or the admitting nurse to arrange this.

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

Care partners who enter or leave 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 for assistance 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 (a fever and/or cough, runny nose, sore throat, or any other respiratory symptoms). When mom delivers a baby and both parents are still in the hospital, parents are allowed to alternate (one parent at a time) for the duration of mom's stay.

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 patient experience office at 519-464-4436 or email <https://www.bluewaterhealth.ca/form/virtual-visit-request-form>

## **Prenatal Information**

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

You will be contacted prior to your appointment, screened over the phone, and given direction at that time.

- 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 also be screened at the entrance of Bluewater Health and on admission to the Maternal Infant Child unit.
- At this time, no one may accompany you during your appointment visit. The size of our waiting areas and assessment rooms make physical distancing challenging.
- For some situations, a support person, they 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, it must be approved by your doctor in advance who will notify the hospital.

## **Birth 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 will 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 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 swab, and umbilical cord blood.
- If you are well, you will have a discussion with your physician or midwife so you can make an informed choice to decide if you want baby to stay in the room in with you.
- 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 you are unwell, or have made an informed choice to separate from your baby, your baby will be cared for by our excellent team of healthcare providers.
- If your baby is admitted to the Special Care Nursery and you are COVID-19 positive, you will not be allowed to enter the Special Care Nursery, in an effort to protect your baby as well as the other infants there. In this event we would work with you to identify a negative care partner to visit baby.

**Can I breastfeed and do “skin to skin” with my baby if I am COVID-19 positive and have made the informed choice to care for my baby?**

- 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 well 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.