Plan for baby of mom with COVID-19 concerns

Our goal is to keep your baby safe and healthy. We made these recommendations to reduce the chance that your baby would become sick from this virus. We ask for your help in ensuring that these recommendations are followed.

Plan for the Delivery:
So far, babies who do get sick with COVID-19 get it after birth and not during the pregnancy. You should wear a mask to decrease spread of the virus. All the people caring for you and your baby will be wearing protective equipment. You should wear a mask whenever someone else is in your room.

Newborn care:
After delivery, your baby will probably be taken to a separate area after birth and will be kept in a separate area, at least 6 feet away from you with a barrier, until going home. This is done to decrease the chance of the virus getting to your baby, which is more likely if you are sick, especially if you are very ill, or have had recent fever. Other factors taken into account will be: 1. The result of your COVID-19 test, 2. If you are breastfeeding, 3. Enough rooms at the hospital to allow each of you to have a separate room, and 4. Ability to keep you separate after you go home.

The doctors will speak with you if they feel that separation may not be needed. Your baby will be bathed as soon as it is safe. You should identify a healthy family member (preferably someone who was not exposed to you) who can care for your baby while you are sick. That caregiver should limit their movement back and forth between your room and the baby’s room, if you are separated. Your baby may also be tested for the virus.

Can I breastfeed?
Breastmilk provides protection against many illnesses and is the best feeding choice for most infants. However, in order to decrease exposure to the virus, you should pump your breastmilk, and it will be given to your baby. You must wash your hands and the breast pump parts very well and you should wear a mask while pumping. Washing your breasts before pumping would be a good idea too. Your breastmilk should not contain the virus, but the virus can be on objects and surfaces, which is why washing is so important. If you are not separated, and you directly breastfeed, you must wear and mask and wash your hands and breasts thoroughly.

Communication:
We will give you frequent updates about your baby. To help you see your baby, we will try to use phone video or other ways of video. To decrease use of protective equipment, the baby’s doctor will talk with you by phone. Please feel free to ask any questions to your doctor.

If you are COVID-19 positive, all your close contacts (those who spent 15 minutes or longer within 6 feet of you) will be asked to leave the hospital and stay at home, away from others. This is to decrease the spread of the coronavirus in the community.

When is baby ready to go home?
If your baby is doing well, he/she can usually go home after 36-48 hours of age. Hopefully, you will be feeling well enough to go home too. If you have to stay in the hospital longer and a healthy caregiver is available, your baby could go home with them.

Follow up:
Your baby should have an appointment with the pediatrician within a few days after going home from the hospital. Please inform the pediatrician’s office about the concerns for COVID-19, so they can be prepared for your visit. Once your appointment is made, the doctor taking care of your baby at the hospital will call them too.

What if my baby is in the NICU or Special Care Nursery?
Once it is safe, you will be able to visit your baby in the NICU or special care nursery. Until then, you will not be able to visit the baby. In order to keep the youngest and most fragile babies from getting sick from the virus, no one who has been exposed to COVID-19 or suspected COVID-19 will be allowed in the NICU. If you are not able to visit, we will work on ways to keep you involved in the care of your baby, using photos or video if possible. You should also continue to pump breast milk so we can give it to your baby.
After going home from the hospital:

Breastfeeding:
If you are breastfeeding, you will need a breast pump when you go home from the hospital so you can continue to get breastmilk for the baby. Once your illness is over, you will be able to breastfeed directly. You should continue to wear a mask and wash your hands and breasts well before feeding your baby. Because your illness may have delayed direct breastfeeding, follow-up about breastfeeding is important. Your hospital or pediatrician may have a phone number you call for help. You can also call The Ohio Department of Health Breastfeeding Hotline, available 24/7: 1-888-588-3423.

When can I stop separating from my baby?
We know that the virus can be shed by someone who has the virus for weeks. We recommend that you take steps to protect your baby from the virus. To keep your baby negative, we suggest that your baby is kept in a different room from you while you are sick and getting better. You should continue very good hand washing and wear a mask for at least 1-2 weeks (see above recommendations from the CDC). You should use a separate bathroom, if possible. Please continue the very best hand washing and cleaning of your home, especially frequently touched surfaces.

The CDC recommends that you and your baby should stay apart until:

1. You feel well,
2. You have not had a fever (without taking medications) for at least 72 hours (3 full days), and at least 7 days have passed since your symptoms started.
3. When testing is more available, your baby can have swabs of the nose done at 24 and 48 hours of age. If both tests are negative, your baby would be considered negative at birth.

Whichever of these times is longer should be the time used.

If your baby is negative but requires a longer hospital stay, you will not be able to visit the baby in the NICU or Special Care nursery until you qualify for removal of the precautions set forth by the CDC guidelines. No one who has been exposed to COVID-19 or suspected COVID-19 will be permitted into the NICU, in an effort to keep the youngest and most fragile babies from being exposed to this dangerous virus.

When should I take my baby to the doctor?
You should have an appointment a few days after going home from the hospital. If your baby develops: fever, problems with breathing, problems feeding, significant jaundice, or poor coloring, call your baby’s doctor right away for further instructions. If you are very concerned about your baby’s health, call 911.

If your baby needs readmission: The birth hospital would be a good choice if the reasons for admission are not related to COVID-19, no respiratory problems. The most common causes of readmission for newborns are feeding issues and jaundice requiring treatment. If your Baby is having symptoms such as fever, cough, trouble breathing, which could be a result of COVID-19, the baby may need to go to the Children’s Hospital.

References

1. AAP publication 3/17/2020, Wong et al
2. CDC: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/
3. AAP: Management of Infants Born to Mothers with COVID-19 Date of Document: April 2, 2020