

# Coronavirus update

Obstetric care is an essential service and Auckland Obstetric Centre will be open as usual. However, in accordance with government guidelines and Auckland hospital requirements, there will be some minor changes in the way your care is provided. These measures are in place to ensure the safety of you, your families and our AOC family.

Novel coronavirus is the name given to the virus responsible for the current pandemic; Covid 19 is the disease this virus causes. This is a new virus that we haven't seen before. There is no cure and currently no vaccine. Whilst the majority of people contracting Covid 19 will experience a flu like illness, approximately 10% will require hospital admission, and of that 10%, approximately 4% will need intensive care.

The current government responses are essential to avoid the exponential rise in the numbers of patients requiring intensive care at the same time (as we have seen in Italy). If we can “flatten the curve” and “hold the line” we can avoid overwhelming medical services.

Some good news – pregnant women seem to be at no increased risk over and above the general population. There is no evidence of spread from an infected woman to her fetus and as such, no fetal abnormalities are expected following infection (unlike Zika).

## What we are doing at AOC.

- › Our rigorous cleaning protocols have been stepped up even further.
- › The waiting room has some changes to facilitate social distancing and reduce the risk of viral transmission.
- › Doctor rostering is changing to ensure continuity of your care and to allow for staff sickness.

**ALL CONTACT NUMBERS REMAIN THE SAME. ONE OF OUR AOC DOCTORS WILL ALWAYS BE AVAILABLE FOR YOU DURING YOUR PREGNANCY AND IN LABOUR.**

## What we ask you to do.

- › **PLEASE** leave partners, support people and children at home. **DO NOT** bring them with you into AOC for your appointment. They are welcome to facetime/ speakerphone in. Clearly if there is a significant problem with you or your baby, then exceptions will be made for partners OR another support person.
- › If you are in self isolation or share a household with someone in self isolation, please **DO NOT COME IN**.
- › If you have been overseas in the last 2 weeks or share a household with someone who has been overseas in the last 2 weeks, please **DO NOT COME IN**.
- › If you have a cough, temperature or a cold, please phone AOC rooms on the morning of your appointment to discuss what to do.
- › Please email [reception@obstetrics.co.nz](mailto:reception@obstetrics.co.nz) if your preferred contact email has changed as a result of a change in your working arrangements.

# Coronavirus (Covid-19) Infection in pregnancy.

## Questions and answers for AOC patients.

**Q: Are pregnant women more likely to contract the infection than non pregnant women?**

A: No.

**Q: Pregnant women are at greater risk of getting severely unwell with influenza – is it the same with Covid-19?**

A: The limited data, mainly from China, is so far reassuring and pregnant women don't appear to get sicker. Most pregnant women will only have a mild to moderate infection.

**Q: Can the mother infect the baby while it is in the womb or during labour?**

A: This is very unlikely. A case series from China tested amniotic fluid, cord blood, neonatal throat swabs and breastmilk samples from Covid-19 infected mothers and all samples tested negative for the virus. The virus is not present in genital fluid. As there is no evidence of an intrauterine fetal infection with Covid-19, there should be no increased risk of congenital abnormalities as a result of maternal infection.

**Q: Is there an increased risk of miscarriage?**

A: There is no current data to suggest an increased risk of early miscarriage in a Covid-19 infection.

**Q: If I have Covid-19 when I go into labour, what will be different?**

A: The most important issue is that you TELL US about any symptoms (cough, sore throat, fever and loss of smell) BEFORE you come to the hospital, so that we can be prepared for your arrival. We will monitor your temperature, breathing rate and oxygen level in your blood. We will want to continuously monitor your baby with a cardiotocograph (CTG) as a small study suggests there may be a higher rate of fetal distress in labour.

**Q: Is it safer to have a Caesarean section if you have a Covid-19 infection?**

A: There is currently no evidence to favour one mode of birth over another. Your mode of birth will not be influenced by the presence of Covid-19 unless your respiratory condition is so severe that you require urgent delivery.

**Q: Is it ok to still use the birthing pool if I have Covid 19 in labour?**

A: No. The birthing pool is to be avoided in suspected or confirmed cases of Covid 19. This is because staff are unable to use adequate protection equipment, and there is a risk of infection with faeces which can also transmit the virus.

**Q: Can I still have an epidural if I have Covid-19 when I am in labour?**

A: There is no evidence that an epidural or spinal anaesthetic is contraindicated with Covid 19. Women should, in fact, be encouraged to have an early epidural with suspected/confirmed Covid-19 to minimise the need for general anaesthesia if urgent delivery is needed.

**Q: Can I still have delayed cord clamping if I am infected?**

A: Yes, there is no evidence to the contrary.

**Q: What do the doctors and midwives wear when I am in labour with a Covid-19 infection?**

A: Gloves, apron, gown, face mask and a visor.

**Q: Do I need to wear anything special if I am infected?**

A: When you arrive at the hospital, you will be given, and need to wear, a special mask, to reduce the risk of passing your infection to the health staff looking after you.

**Q: Can I still breastfeed if I am infected?**

A: There is only a small study from China that looks at Covid-19 in breastmilk. Reassuringly, in all cases, the breast milk from proven infected mothers tested negative. The main risk for infants with breastfeeding is from close contact with the mother. Currently we advise that the benefits of breastfeeding outweigh any potential risks of transmission of the virus.

## Our advice if you are infected with a newborn is:

- › Hand washing before touching the baby, breast pump or bottles.
- › Avoiding coughing or sneezing on the baby while feeding on the breast.
- › Considering wearing a mask while breastfeeding.
- › Follow recommendations for pump cleaning after each use.
- › Considering asking someone who is well to feed expressed milk to the baby.

## Summary

- › AOC is open as usual, but is operating under government and hospital restrictive guidelines.
- › Please continue to contact us for all your **OBSTETRIC** queries.
- › Despite restrictions we will ensure that there will always be an AOC doctor available for you, including in labour.
- › Out of hours, please only contact us for **URGENT OBSTETRIC** related issues.
- › Any concerns related solely to a **COVID 19** infection, please contact the **Healthline on 0800 3585453** who will direct you to the appropriate testing station as required.