



Ascension

HAVING A BABY DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ASCENSION MICHIGAN

Congratulations! The birth of a baby is such a special time in your life and a major event for your family! Thank you for choosing an Ascension Michigan hospital. We want to work together with you to help keep you, your baby, the hospital care team, and the community safe.

Seek care with confidence knowing our commitment to the safety of our patients remains our highest priority. There are important decisions to make, especially during the pandemic. We are here to support you and give you information to help make those decisions.

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW BEFORE I HAVE MY BABY?

We understand that it's not easy to be pregnant and planning for a baby during the pandemic. According to current information from the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), pregnant women might be at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19. Talking with your provider about YOUR risk is important.

WHAT CAN I DO TO PROTECT MYSELF DURING PREGNANCY?

- Practice social distancing. Stay at home as much as possible and stay at least 6 feet away from others.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Wear a face mask covering your nose and mouth in public places or when you are around others. (Refer to the guidelines from the [CDC](#) for important tips and updates.)
- Avoid face-to-face contact with people who are sick.
- Talk to your doctor or midwife to plan a birth experience that is right for you.
- Talk with your family and friends and tell them how you are feeling.
- Focus on caring for yourself. Take breaks from the news and try activities that may help you relax, like listening to music, stretching, and breathing exercises.



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WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT WHEN I ARRIVE AT THE HOSPITAL TO HAVE MY BABY?

When you arrive at the hospital to have your baby, you will notice that things look different. We are maintaining strict safety precautions to keep everyone safe in our care. Everyone must participate in these precautions, even if they are not sick.

- If you are in labor and think you or someone in your family may have COVID-19, call your care provider and the hospital BEFORE your arrival so staff can do their best to protect you, your baby, your family, and others from being infected.
- When you come to the birthing center in labor or for a scheduled delivery, you may be tested for COVID-19 even if you do not feel sick or have not been exposed. This will depend on current guidelines and rules. We may test you again if you have any signs of sickness.
- The visitor policy in place at the time you come to the hospital will reflect the latest guidance from the state health department and federal authorities, and may change quickly. If you are COVID-19 positive, permitted visitors must stay in your room or designated area and limit going to other areas in the hospital.
- Every person (patients, visitors, doctors, and care team members) who enters the hospital is checked at the entrance for any COVID-19 symptoms, their temperature is taken and they are given a face mask if they do not have one. If the screening shows a person may be sick, including the pregnant patient's support person, they will not be allowed to enter the hospital, except if that person is in need of emergent medical care. Individuals with known COVID-19 positive status who are not seeking care, including the pregnant patient's support person, will not be permitted to enter the hospital.
- Even if you are COVID-19 negative, we will still ask you and your support person to wear a mask at all times during your hospital stay except when eating and drinking.
- Doulas are permitted during this time but must remain with you at all times and follow visitor/support person guidelines and expectations.
- Staff will look a little different. The birth care team will be wearing masks and other personal protective equipment (PPE) as needed during your stay.
- While in the hospital, you and your support person should wash your hands frequently. Scrub for at least 20 seconds. If you cannot get out of bed, use hand sanitizer for 20 seconds or until your hands are dry.



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AFTER THE BABY IS BORN, HOW CAN I PROTECT MYSELF AND MY BABY IN THE HOSPITAL?

- As you care for your baby, you and your support person should continue to wear your mask in the room, wash hands frequently and scrub for at least 20 seconds. If you cannot get out of bed, you can scrub your hands with a sanitizer for 20 seconds or until your hands are dry.
- If your baby is born early or if your baby is sick after birth, your baby may be transferred to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) or Special Care Nursery (SCN) for more advanced medical care. If this happens, additional rules will apply because the babies in the NICU and SCN are much more likely to get sick. Please follow the specific visiting instructions and discuss your questions and concerns with your care team.
- If you or your support person develops symptoms of COVID-19 (including fever, cough or shortness of breath), please tell your nurse or other care team member immediately.

WHAT IF I TEST POSITIVE FOR COVID-19 OR THERE IS A POSSIBILITY I HAVE IT AFTER DELIVERY?

Many mothers and their families are worried about passing the COVID-19 virus to their babies during and after delivery. If you have COVID-19 at the time of delivery, we are here to help you, your new baby, and your family.

If you have a fever or other signs or symptoms, you will need to be tested for COVID-19 when you arrive at the hospital. We will assume that you are positive until the test comes back to confirm your status. This is to ensure the safety of you, your new baby, your family, and your care team. There are several different types of tests that we use based on the situation. Results from some tests can take longer than others.

Bacteria and viruses can sometimes be passed on from a pregnant woman to her newborn baby before, during, or after birth. The chances of passing the virus to your baby are low, if you take all of the safety steps to protect your baby. But it is important to be careful. Two options are available:

- Your baby can stay in the same room with you.
- Or you can be separated from your baby and have your baby cared for in another location in the birthing center.



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Current data suggest that the risk of spreading the virus to the baby is no greater if the baby is cared for in a separate room than if steps are taken to protect your baby from infection and the baby stays in your room.

WHAT IF I HAVE COVID-19 AND I AM TOO SICK TO CARE FOR MY BABY?

If you are too sick and cannot physically care for your baby, then temporary separation may be the right option, unless a family member or support person who is not sick is available to care for your baby in your hospital room.

- If you are separated from your baby, you can bring a phone or other personal devices to the hospital to help you stay connected. If you don't have a device, the staff may have devices that can be used to connect with you. And the care team will continue to provide updates.
- Bonding with your baby can come in many forms. If you cannot touch your baby, you can talk, read softly, or sing to your baby over the phone or video. The birthing center care team will do everything they can to help you and your baby stay connected.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I HAVE COVID-19 BUT I WANT TO CARE FOR MY BABY WITH ME IN MY ROOM?

If you or your support person is able to care for the baby, the baby can stay in your room with you during your entire hospital stay. The hospital care teams and staff are committed to keeping you and your baby together as safely as possible. But a few special rules apply when having your baby stay in your room while you are COVID-19 positive.

- Your baby will be tested for the virus and watched closely.
- We will help you bathe your baby as soon as it is appropriate, to help prevent transmission of the virus. Talk with your care team to see what is right for you.
- To decrease spread of the virus from you to your baby, your baby should be kept in a crib as much as possible. And the crib should be kept at least 6 feet away from your bed.
- We will provide you with a physical barrier of some kind to help keep the baby as safe as possible. We will clearly mark what it means to be 6 feet away.



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- You will need to wear a mask and wash your hands frequently when caring for your baby. When you are not directly caring for or feeding your baby, your baby should be in their crib, 6 feet away and behind the barrier provided.
- Your support person can care for the baby as well. This **MUST** be the **SAME** support person you had with you during labor and birth. Your support person will be reminded to wash their hands for 20 seconds before and after handling the newborn. They must wear all protective gear provided to them at all times while in the hospital room and will be asked to follow all the rules for wearing the protective gear, including when to change it. If your support person becomes symptomatic or tests positive for COVID-19, they will be asked to leave for your safety and the safety of your newborn.

WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO SAFELY FEED MY BABY?

The many benefits of breastfeeding are well known. It provides the best nutrition and may prevent many diseases in both mother and baby. Breast milk is known to provide protection against other viruses and it may provide protection against COVID-19, too. Current data and research suggest that breast milk is not a likely source of COVID-19 transmission.

Just like the CDC recommends, we encourage you to breastfeed your baby, especially now. If you are undecided on how you will feed your baby, please ask your nurse and doctor for more information on the benefits of breastfeeding. If you do decide to breastfeed, we are here to help support you in doing so safely.

- If you are COVID-19 positive or suspected of having the virus, you should wash your hands before breastfeeding and wear a mask at all times, especially during feeding.
- If you choose to pump instead, remember to wash your hands before pumping. Pumping should begin within 3 hours after delivery. The pump should be thoroughly cleaned after each use. The hospital staff will explain the CDC guidelines for proper cleaning and disinfecting recommendations. If you prefer to hand express your milk, we can help with that as well.
- If your baby is in the NICU or SCN and you wish to provide breastmilk for your baby, the NICU and SCN nurses will help you safely provide breastmilk for your baby while you are separated. Because of infection control guidelines, mothers who are positive for COVID-19 or mothers suspected of having the virus will not be able to visit their baby or directly breastfeed their babies who are admitted to the NICU or SCN.



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If you test COVID-19 positive, and you decide to feed your baby formula by bottle, the rules still apply. Wash your hands before you prepare the bottle. And, wear a mask at all times around your baby, especially while you are bottle feeding your baby. Your support person should follow the same rules.

These are the steps that will be taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and to help keep you and your baby safe. The information is based on the guidance from the CDC, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology in place at the time this document was created. If any of these entities provide additional guidance, we will do our best to share it with you.

Our caregivers are fully prepared to care for you and your family, with strict precautions in place for your safety while in our care. And please know that your care team is happy to answer any questions you may have. Let's work together to make your hospital experience as comfortable and safe as possible.