

# PREGNANT OR BREASTFEEDING? WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

Information compiled by the Zero to Thrive team, led by Dr. Maria Muzik | Document last updated 03/24/2020

## Coping with the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Crisis

The COVID-19 pandemic is a rapidly changing situation that is creating stress and fear for pregnant and breastfeeding women and their families. Being fearful or anxious in such a stressful time can at times feel overwhelming and hard to manage.

Below are some suggestions about how you might take care of yourself so that you can take care of your family:



### Take a break from the news and social media

Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting.



### Care for your body

Try to eat healthy, exercise regularly, get plenty of sleep, and avoid alcohol and drugs.



### Make time to unwind

Try to do some other activities you enjoy. Take a nature walk, listen to music, or draw your feelings.



### Connect with others

Reach out to a friend or family. Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling.

At times, seemingly “little things” can help us through very stressful moments, get us grounded again and help us to cope. Breathing is essential and also a good way to help you calm your mind. Try the 4 Square Breathing when you are super stressed.

## Four Square Breathing: A Basic Exercise in Mindfulness

Four Square Breathing is a calming exercise that can be done anywhere and built upon if and when you'd like. Children can also do this.

Take a deep breath slowly to the count of 4, then hold that breath to the count of 4, then exhale that breath to the count of 4, and again pause to the count of 4. Repeat for as long as you can or want. Adding to 4 square breathing – listen to calming music while you do, imagine a comforting place while you do, focus relaxing attention on your neck and shoulders, back, arms, then legs.



## Connecting with Others While Keeping a Safe Physical Distance





Experts are recommending that we keep space between people – at least 6 feet. This is called social distancing and is an important way to reduce the spread of the coronavirus. However, keeping physical space between people does not have to mean being lonely. In fact, staying connected to friends and family will reduce your stress. Call a loved one or check in with your neighbor while maintaining at least 6-feet of space between you and them. It can be calming to simply think about the people you care about and draw on the strength of those connections. So stay back, but keep your heart close.

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Although there is a lot to learn about this new virus, the majority of available information at this time suggests that healthy pregnant woman who get coronavirus will have a mild to moderate illness and will not need to be hospitalized. For most women and infants, breastfeeding is safe. Ask your care team and check in with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website ([cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus)) for the most up-to-date information.

## A few things to keep in mind:

-  Most out-patient visits are **MOVING TO VIDEO VISITS**. Call your care team before you go to the office.
-  If you are sick or have been exposed to COVID-19, **TAKE ALL POSSIBLE PRECAUTIONS** to avoid spreading the virus, including covering your cough or sneeze (or wearing a mask if possible) and washing your hands frequently.
-  If you have a **COUGH, FEVER, AND/OR SHORTNESS OF BREATH**, contact your doctor immediately.
-  **CALL THE HOSPITAL LABOR & DELIVERY** before you go in for the most up to date instructions.



It is always important for pregnant women to protect themselves from illnesses

Pregnant women experience changes in their bodies that may increase their risk of some infections and may be more likely to have serious illness as a result of infection. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) recently issued a statement echoing concern for pregnant women to take care to avoid exposure. If you are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, including coughing, fever, or shortness of breath, contact your doctor.

## COVID-19 and Feeding your Baby

- The virus does not appear to pass through breast milk.
- A mother with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 should [take all possible precautions](#) to avoid spreading the virus to her infant, including washing her hands before touching the baby and wearing a face mask, if possible, while breastfeeding.
- If a mother is pumping she should wash her hands before touching any pump or bottle parts and then, if possible, have someone who is well bottle-feed the expressed breast milk to the infant.
- Similarly, if the baby is formula fed, if possible, someone who is well should bottle-feed the baby.