



Having Your Baby During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Questions You May Have

Having a baby is wonderful but can be stressful even during the best of times. At North Carolina Women's Hospital and the UNC Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, we know that COVID-19 has created a new kind of worry for many pregnant women and their families. Based on expert guidance, our maternal and newborn specialists have developed multiple measures to be sure that you, your newborn, and your family stay safe and healthy during your pregnancy and while you are in the hospital. Providing an environment that provides protection for you and our healthcare team may mean you have to adjust your original plans, but we are here to support you through this time.

Can I bring someone with me to my prenatal appointments? On September 21, 2020, the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology revised its outpatient policy to permit one person to accompany a pregnant patient to her appointments. This individual can be an adult, child, or baby. Both the patient and her companion will need to be screened and wear a mask (if age appropriate) for the duration of the visit.

How is UNC keeping women safe during labor and delivery? As we now know that some people can be infected with COVID-19 without having symptoms (asymptomatic), all patients will be tested for COVID-19 either before arrival for a planned delivery or when they arrive at the hospital. There are rules to make sure that anyone who needs to be treated for COVID-19 will be isolated from other patients. All of UNC's medical staff are working hard to ensure that your and their risk of being exposed to COVID-19 is as low as possible.

Who can come with me when I have my baby? Hospital staff and your obstetric team are trying to minimize the number of people who come to the hospital. At this point of the pandemic, you may bring two people that are at least 18 years old with you for your labor and delivery (a doula counts as one of your two support persons). After birth, one designated person will be allowed to be with you for the entire length of stay in the hospital. You may have a doula during labor and delivery, but not on the postpartum floor. Again, your labor doula will be counted as one of your two support persons.

What is the UNC "Masks on Policy"? All approved visitors, which includes your support persons, will undergo a health screening at the hospital entrance and issued an appropriate mask, which they will be asked to wear for the duration of the visit. In order to protect you and our hospital staff, patients and their designated birth partners will be required to wear their masks whenever they are outside of their rooms and when anyone else enters their rooms. Our hospital wide policy states that visitors will not be allowed to remain in the hospital without wearing the provided mask as described.

How is UNC keeping babies safe? NC Women's Hospital is a Baby-Friendly Hospital and does not separate healthy moms and babies. You will be allowed to keep your baby in the room with you, minimizing the risk of being exposed to COVID-19. All of our staff have received training to make sure you and they are protected.

What if I have COVID-19? Can I still deliver my baby at UNC Women's? Yes, we are prepared to care for mothers who have COVID-19 or are suspected to have the virus. Using the expert guidance provided by

the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the Society of Maternal Fetal Medicine, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the World Health Organization, and our own specialists, we have developed detailed protocols to ensure that you and your baby receive the care you need. If you do have Covid-19 at the time you have your baby, you will still be allowed to bring one person with you for support.

Will my baby be separated from me if I have COVID-19? Our goal is to protect you and your baby. While some experts recommend that babies be separated from their mothers, we are prepared to discuss this decision with each affected family to make the best decision.

Can I breastfeed my baby if I have COVID-19? We know that breastfeeding is very important to many mothers and has many benefits for newborns. We are committed to working with you to ensure your little one is able to receive breastmilk.

I have more specific questions. Where can I get answers? UNC Health's Coronavirus website www.unchealthcare.org/coronavirus provides updated information as it relates to UNC Health and our affiliated hospitals and our preparations. The Women's Health Education Center can answer pregnancy specific questions for NC Women's Hospital: Stork@unchealth.unc.edu. We will make every effort to answer your questions as we are daily evaluating the current public health situation and adjust our policies and care accordingly. We also encourage you to talk to your prenatal care provider and to practice the recommendations provided by public health officials and our state leaders before you come to the hospital and after discharge.

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