



COVID-19:

Changes in Pregnancy and Maternity Care Advice for Women and Their Families

The COVID-19 pandemic has prompted changes in how doctors' offices and hospitals practice medicine to protect the health and safety of patients and health care workers. Experts from the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine (SMFM) and SIU Medicine - OBGYN offer the following information for your upcoming prenatal or ultrasound appointment. Also information if you are due to have your baby soon.

Restrictions for Prenatal Care Appointments and Ultrasounds

Telehealth appointments may replace some of your in-person OB check-ups.

- If you have a healthy pregnancy, it is safer for you to use telehealth for some appointments during this time of social distancing. Telehealth appointments can be done on a smartphone, computer or telephone.

What if you have concerns between your visits?

- Telehealth appointments are also useful if you think you may have symptoms of an illness. In this situation, it's better to stay at home to avoid potentially spreading germs to others in a doctor's office.

Your health care provider can assess your symptoms and recommend treatment. If you need a prescription medication, it can be sent to your pharmacy.

Ultrasound Appointments

- Ultrasound exams involve close contact between you and the sonographer.

You may bring one healthy support to your ultrasound appointment to reduce the chance of spreading the COVID-19 virus to other patients and health care workers. Your sonographer will wear a mask, and you may be asked to wear a mask as well.

We understand not being able to share your ultrasound exam with loved ones can be disappointing, but at this time it is necessary to keep you, your baby, and our staff safe.

Before your ultrasound or in-person appointment

- You may be contacted by phone and asked if you and anyone you are bringing have symptoms of COVID-19
 - Fever
 - sore throat
 - cough
 - change in smell or taste
 - recent travel
 - work history
 - living in densely populated housing
 - recent exposure to someone with COVID-19
- This screening will also occur when you arrive for your appointment plus your temperature will be taken. Be honest in your answers. If you have symptoms—even if they are mild—you should let your provider know before you arrive.

Your health care provider may reschedule your exam to a future date if it's safe to do so for your pregnancy or refer you to a more acute care facility. If people accompanying you have symptoms or have been recently exposed to the virus, it's best for them to stay home. If they do come with you, they might be asked to wait in the car during your appointment.

- Remember to follow basic personal protection practices whenever you need to leave your house, whether it's to the grocery store or your doctor's office.
 - Wash your hands frequently for 20 seconds with soap and water, use hand sanitizer when soap and water are not available
 - Maintain social distancing (e.g., stay 6 feet apart from others)
 - Wear a cloth mask to cover nose and mouth
 - Practice good cough hygiene (cough into your arm)
 - At home, clean and sanitize surfaces frequently, especially those that you touch often and those that come in contact with food.

Restrictions for Women in the Hospital

Both Memorial Medical Center and St. John's Hospital are limiting the number of visitors and support persons that can be present in labor and delivery rooms. It's understandable to be anxious, sad, or angry about the uncertainty of this situation. But here are a few things to keep in mind that may help ease your anxiety:

- Only one support person will be allowed in the Labor Room. The Springfield hospitals do not allow the use of video conferencing apps during labor and delivery.
- Know that you will receive a lot of help and encouragement from highly skilled professionals, including registered nurses, your doctor, and the doctors on call, throughout your labor and delivery. Nurses who specialize in labor and delivery are seasoned labor coaches. At no time will you lack support.

- You may be asked to wear a mask during your labor and delivery. We understand this may be frustrating, but at this time it is necessary to keep you, your baby, and our staff safe.

What if you have symptoms of COVID-19 when you come to deliver?

- If you have symptoms of COVID-19 when you come to the hospital to give birth, you will be tested for the virus. You will be assigned a room in an area set aside for women with COVID-19 until we have results of the test.

Your nurses and care team will wear masks and other protective clothing as they care for you, but the level of support and comfort you receive will not be affected. You and your support person will be asked to wear masks.

After you have your baby, experts recommend that you and your baby stay in separate rooms to protect your baby from getting the virus.

At this time, the COVID-19 virus has not been found in breast milk. Breastfeeding is still encouraged for its many benefits, including protecting your baby against illnesses. If you choose to breastfeed, precautions are recommended, such as wearing a mask while breastfeeding or pumping into a bottle and having someone who is not sick feed the baby.

Hospital Tours & Classes

Currently the hospitals have suspended all tours and labor and breastfeeding classes. Please refer to the information given at the start of your pregnancy or ask your provider for other resources.

Media

- According to media reports, as a result of hospital visitor restrictions, some women have decided to give birth at home. Homebirth has many risks. Problems can happen during any birth, often with little or no warning. Also, because of the pandemic, if an emergency at home were to develop, ambulance service may not be readily available. Memorial Medical Center and ST. John's hospital remain the safest place to give birth in the Springfield area.

Hospital rules are changing quickly as more information about COVID-19 is gathered and shared among health care experts. A lot about COVID-19 is still unknown. Decisions hospitals makes one day may change the next day as new guidelines are issued from infection control experts. For now, keep yourself informed, and talk to your health care provider if you have questions.

What we do now will affect you and your baby's health, and also the health of other women, their babies, and health care workers.

As SIU OBGYN providers, we are here for you and your family. Stay healthy and safe. Enjoy and be hopeful during this special time of your pregnancy. Call with any questions or concerns. 217-545-8000.