

## Managing at Home Following your Birth if you have or are suspected of having Covid-19 Infection

**Emotional Reactions are to be expected.** Having a new baby can bring great joy, but also great stress. During the COVID-19 outbreak with social distancing, this could be extremely difficult time. Many new mothers already feel very isolated so feeling anxiety and stress is a normal reaction to what's happening.

You can expect to visit your family doctor or nurse practitioner (NP), or be visited by your midwife, within a few days of going home. If you do not have a family doctor or NP please speak to your nurse so we can plan for your baby's first check-up. If you have questions or concerns in the meantime there are supports you can access from home such as:

Middlesex London Health Unit

[www.healthunit.com/babies](http://www.healthunit.com/babies)

Phone: 519-663-5317

Patient Information handouts:

[www.lhsc.on.ca/motherbaby](http://www.lhsc.on.ca/motherbaby)

[www.healthunit.com/](http://www.healthunit.com/)

### Breastfeeding

If you have been diagnosed with or are suspected of having COVID-19 you can continue to breastfeed or supply expressed breast milk for your baby. Breastfeeding lowers your baby's risk of illness throughout infancy and childhood. So far, the virus that causes COVID-19 has not been found in breast milk. It is still possible though for your baby to become infected with COVID-19 through contact or respiratory transmission from an infected person. Mothers with symptoms of COVID-19 who are breastfeeding or practicing skin-to-skin contact with their babies should take precautions.

If you are breastfeeding and have symptoms of or have confirmed COVID-19, it is important that you take steps to avoid spreading the virus to your baby:

- Practice social distancing in your home, with the only exception being the baby.
- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap or hand sanitizer before and after touching your baby, your other children or family members.
- Routinely clean and disinfect any surfaces you touch with approved hard-surface disinfectants.
- If possible, wear a face mask that covers your mouth and nose. In the absence of a mask, breastfeeding should still continue. There is no evidence that homemade fabric masks will provide protection from virus-sized particles. Medical opinions vary though as to whether they might provide minimal protection by decreasing the amount of respiratory droplets. You might consider using a homemade mask, scarf or bandana. Make sure to wash your hands before putting it on and after removing it. Do not let others touch your mask and wash it frequently.
- Wash your hands, chest & breast with soap & water before breast feeding and before expressing breast milk manually or with a breast pump. Wash your hands before touching any pump or bottle parts. Sterilize the equipment carefully before each use according to manufacturer's directions.
- Don't share bottles or breast pump equipment with anyone else.

You might notice a drop in your breast milk supply if you are unwell. If you are too unwell to breastfeed your baby, consider pumping so that someone who is well can feed the baby your expressed breast milk. Expressing regularly will help to maintain your breast milk supply and will ensure that your baby is receiving the nutrition and antibodies he/she needs to stay healthy.

For breastfeeding support, growth and development questions, or to book a breastfeeding home visit in the Middlesex - London area please call the MLHU Health Connection at 519-663-5317 ext. 2280 to speak with a Public Health Nurse, Monday to Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. You can also visit [www.healthunit.com/breastfeeding](http://www.healthunit.com/breastfeeding) or to find a Public Health Unit nearest you visit <http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/common/system/services/phu/locations.aspx>

Check out MAVINS – Maternal Virtual Infant Nutrition Support – this is a virtual environment supported by Lactation Consultants, Nurses, Doctors etc. You can log in at the following website to learn and connect about breastfeeding, lactation, and mothering. Use the access code: RJSM <https://mavins.lhsc.on.ca/>

**Managing your wellness after birth.** For many expectant parents, their greatest fear is becoming sick themselves. Who will look after the baby at home if this happens? We encourage you to talk about a plan for this scenario in advance. This may require you having a plan A and a Plan B. Who else may be available to support you in your home if you or your partner become ill? Ideally it should be someone from outside your home, who has not been exposed to anyone in your household.

Also remember that all new moms are at risk for postpartum depression (PPD). Given the social distancing, the significant changes around your birth planning (with visitor restrictions) and your early days at home without the extra family/friend support in your home, this could potentially increase your risk for PPD or anxiety. We encourage you and your partner to be familiar with the signs and symptoms of postpartum depression and reach out quickly to your family doctor, NP, midwife or a public health nurse with any concerns.

Middlesex-London Health Unit has information on Perinatal Mental Health at [www.healthunit.com/pmh](http://www.healthunit.com/pmh)  
You can also contact Reach Out (24/7 Crisis Service) - Call or Webchat - 1-866-933-2023

**If you have thoughts of hurting yourself, other people or your baby seek help immediately from a healthcare professional**

**Practice aggressive social distancing.** Although difficult, we recommend practicing aggressive social distancing after your birth as you return home. This is because newborns have immature immune systems and can get sick from the virus more easily. Their illness could become critical in some situations. Avoiding visits with people outside your home could very much help reduce risk. Remember that people may not feel sick but could still spread COVID-19 or other illness. It could be very difficult to limit contact with close family, such as grandparents, during this exciting time with a new baby. You will need to make careful decisions.

Under normal circumstances, new parents are encouraged to keep infants away from crowds and sick people, which means many are already prepared to stay home. As such, it is likely you'll only need to reach out to close immediate family and friends to update them that you are home safe and planning on not accepting visitors. Consider FaceTime, Skype, Zoom and other video conferencing sites to allow their family to participate in a different way, while maintaining safe distances from your home. Consider connecting with other new parents on social media and build a virtual village who can help you stay connected.

**You must isolate yourself from others if you have COVID-19, have COVID-19 symptoms or may have been exposed to COVID-19. If you start to feel worse, contact your health care provider or Telehealth (1-866-797-0000).**

## Stay home

- Do not use public transportation, taxis or rideshares.
- Do not go to work, school or other public places.



## Avoid contact with others

- No visitors unless essential (e.g. care providers)
- Stay away from seniors and people with chronic medical conditions (e.g. diabetes, lung problems, immune deficiency).
- As much as possible, stay in a separate room away from other people in your home and use a separate bathroom if you have one.
- Make sure that shared rooms have good airflow (e.g. open windows).
- If these steps are not possible, keep a distance of at least two metres from others at all times.



## Keep your distance

- If you are in a room with other people, keep a distance of at least two metres and wear a mask that covers your nose and mouth.
- If you cannot wear a mask, people should wear a mask when they are in the same room as you.



## Wash your hands

- Wash your hands often with soap and water.
- Dry your hands with a paper towel or with cloth towel that no one else will share.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.



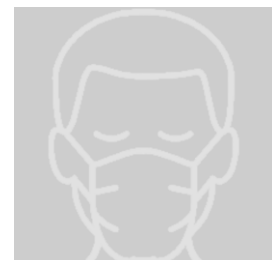
## Cover your coughs and sneezes

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve or elbow, not your hand.
- Throw used tissues in a lined wastebasket, and wash your hands. Lining the wastebasket with a plastic bag makes waste disposal safer.
- Clean your hands after emptying the wastebasket.



## Wear a mask over your nose and mouth

- Wear a mask if you must leave your house to see a health care provider.
- Wear a mask when you are within two metres of other people, or stay in a separate room.



\*adapted from Public Health Ontario, How to Self-Isolate, Coronavirus Disease 2019  
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