



Wellness Strategies for Pregnant Women in the context of COVID-19

Preparing to have a baby during a pandemic is uncharted territory leaving many pregnant women feeling scared, sad, and isolated. You're living a once in an era experience that few people can relate to or understand. With that in mind, here are some strategies and ideas on how to gain some feeling of calm, preparation, and control.

Reduce your risk of exposure to COVID-19 as much as possible.

Practice social distancing. Clean your hands frequently using soap and water or alcohol-based hand-sanitizer. Clean and disinfect frequently-touched surfaces daily. Wear a mask or face covering when outside of your home. If you are an essential worker, speak to your manager about reasonable accommodations or precautions.

Set expectations around social distancing.

Not everyone interprets the guidelines around social distancing in the same way. It will be important for you to collaborate with your healthcare team to determine what level of contact is comfortable to you as official guidelines change. Create boundaries around visitation both during pregnancy and after baby's arrival and communicate them clearly to family and friends.

Utilize reputable sources for information regarding COVID-19 and pregnancy.

Visit the websites for the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecology (ACOG), or Centers for Disease Control (CDC) - Check the "People who need extra precaution" section.

Stay in touch with your ob/gyn and providers.

Ask them questions or for updates about latest guidelines around pregnancy and COVID-19 and how your delivery will be different given changing hospital guidelines. They are a valuable source of information and are here to guide you through this experience.

Keep a daily routine that includes self-care activities

Go for gentle walks, sit outside in the sun, drink lots of water, eat well, and rest when you can. Have high protein and high fiber snacks easily accessible if possible and try to avoid excessive sugar and caffeine, which can negatively impact mood and sleep.

Facing financial insecurity while pregnant?

You may be eligible for WIC services which includes healthy food access as well as other social services. See information at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/about-wic-wic-glance>



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Limit the amount and type of Covid-19 related media you are consuming.

Increased worries or negative mood may be signs it is time to reduce or change media exposure.

Support from family and friends.

Consider inviting your support person to join you virtually during prenatal visit if they are not able to attend in person. Connection to loved ones is especially important during social distancing and can be done safely via the phone, FaceTime, Zoom or Skype. Share your feelings about your experience of being pregnant during this public health crisis. It can be helpful to talk to others about any sadness, anger, and grief you may feel about how this experience will be different than you had planned or hoped. Find time to laugh and share in positive stories as well!

Make a birth plan.

A birth plan can be an important communication tool between you, your support persons and your provider and should be developed with a flexible mindset. Expect that changes may be needed to best care for you and your infant. Check with your delivery location about limitations to the number of support persons present during labor and delivery. Decide who you would like to be present physically, identify a back-up, and invite others to join you virtually. If you had envisioned support of a doula during labor and delivery, reach out to see if your doula can offer virtual support or can help you prepare for your birth experience in other ways. Identify music that is calming and create a delivery playlist.

Consider joining a virtual group for pregnant women.

Connecting with other women who are pregnant during COVID 19 may help you feel less alone! Online groups are available through the University of Colorado Department of Psychiatry's Perinatal Mental Health Services at 303-724-1646 or wbhw@cuanschutz.edu.

Talk with your children about the arrival of the new baby.

Prepare them for a delay in getting to meet the baby and for a brief separation from you during labor, delivery and recovery. Have them draw pictures to have in the delivery room or in the post-partum suite or record them singing a song or telling a story to the baby. Plan for who will take care of your children during this experience.

Take time to connect with and get ready for your baby.

Write a letter to your baby about this experience of living through a pandemic. What would you like them to know about this time? How have you planned for their arrival? Start putting together your baby's nursery or sleeping space. Create a cozy space in your home where you picture nursing or bottle feeding your baby. Research pediatricians in your healthcare network and inquire about how to establish care for your baby immediately after birth.

Monitor your mood carefully.

Perinatal mood and anxiety disorders are common and treatable conditions. If you would like to discuss how you are feeling with a perinatal mental health specialist, please ask your Ob/Gyn clinician for referral information or call the University of Colorado Department of Psychiatry's Women's Perinatal Mental Health Programs at 303-724-1646 or email us at WBHW@cuanschutz.edu.



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