

Managing at Home Following your Birth During the Covid-19 Outbreak

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.

Plan for an early discharge. We are encouraging moms and babies to go home as soon as possible around 24 hours after the birth to limit new babies' exposure to COVID-19. Hospital staff will do their best to prepare you for this and will want to ensure your baby is feeding well before you leave hospital.

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,

Patient Information handouts can be found at: www.lhsc.on.ca/motherbaby

Middlesex London Health Unit: www.healthunit.com/babies

For breastfeeding support, growth and development questions, or to book a breastfeeding home visit, please call the Middlesex London Health Unit at 519-663-5317 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

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/>

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 your 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.

- Avoid all non-essential trips in the community
- Household contacts (people you live with) do not need to distance from each other unless they are sick, or have travelled within the past 14 days
- Cancel ALL group gatherings
- Connect via phone, video chat, or social media instead of in-person
- Avoid visiting, especially elderly friends or relatives, unless the visit is essential
- Keep windows down for essential community trips via taxi or rideshares
- You can go outside (for example - to take a walk). While outside, avoid crowds and maintain a distance of two metres (six feet) from those around you

Other Tips and Recommendations:

- Cover coughs/sneezes with your sleeve or ideally a tissue and then throw the tissue into the trash
- Cough into your elbow
- Wash your hands with soap often for at least 20 seconds
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects
- **DON'T** touch your face
- **DON'T** travel and stay home if you have a fever and cough
- **DON'T** wear a face mask if you are well
- Get groceries at most once per week and wipe down all groceries or goods coming into the home

Managing your wellness after birth. For many expectant patients, 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 public health nurse with any concerns.

Middlesex-London Health Unit has information on Perinatal Mental Health at: 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

What to do if you do develop symptoms of Covid-19 including fever, sore throat, cough, or shortness of breath:

1. Use the [COVID-19 Self-Assessment for Middlesex and London](http://www.healthunit.com) - www.healthunit.com
2. Call Telehealth at 1-866-797-0000 for a telephone assessment if you have symptoms that include, fever and/or cough AND any of the following within 14 days prior to the onset of illness:
 - a. Travel outside of Canada
 - b. Close contact with a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19
 - c. Close contact with a person with Acute Respiratory Illness, who has been to an affected area
3. If you are not able to assess your symptoms, consider visiting a COVID-19 Assessment Centre for further information