Background

Current guidance from CDC regarding COVID-19 and pregnancy is based on limited data available. At this point the limited available data does not indicate that pregnancy alone puts people at higher risk for severe illness resulting from COVID-19 infection. However, should the mother become seriously unwell with COVID-19 infection, there is possible risk of fetal growth restriction and/or a risk of premature birth. For this reason, all pregnant healthcare professionals, especially those in high risk areas, are advised to take appropriate transmission precautions and to discuss their individual circumstances with their supervisor and/or local Employee Health department as needed.

Overview of Available Data on COVID-19 and Pregnancy

- The clinical characteristics for COVID-19 in pregnant women have been similar to those reported for non-pregnant adult patients based on available research. While findings suggest that there is emerging evidence that vertical transmission may be possible, serious limitations on available studies indicate that further investigation is needed (Ellington, Strid, Tong, et al, p.6).

- There is currently limited data available regarding susceptibility of COVID-19 and the severity of infection in pregnant women. There are also currently no data suggesting an increased risk of miscarriage or early pregnancy loss in relation to COVID-19. Case reports from early pregnancy studies with SARS (2003) and MERS (2012), also caused by newly emerged coronaviruses, do not demonstrate a convincing relationship between infection and increased risk of miscarriage or second trimester loss.

- Available data does indicate that people of any age with certain underlying medical conditions (including pregnancy) are at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19. Based on what we know at this time, pregnant women might be at an increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19 as compared to non-pregnant women. Additionally, there may be an increased risk of adverse pregnancy outcomes, such as preterm birth, among pregnant women with COVID-19.

Guidance for Pregnant Healthcare Workers

- To reduce severe COVID-19-associated illness, pregnant women should be aware of their potential risk for acquiring severe COVID-19 illness. Prevention of COVID-19 should be emphasized and potential barriers to adherence to these measures should be addressed. Pregnant healthcare workers (HCW) should follow the same risk assessment and infection prevention and control practices [Droplet + Contact + Standard precautions], as any
other, non-pregnant HCW when caring for patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19. Ministries may want to consider limiting exposure of pregnant HCW to patients with confirmed or suspected COVID-19, especially during higher risk procedures (e.g., aerosol-generating procedures) if feasible based on staffing availability.

- When possible, and based on staffing availability, colleagues who are pregnant should review assignments with their supervisor prior to providing those types of care activities that produce a higher concentration of respiratory secretions (e.g., aerosol-generating procedures). If there are alternative personnel that can provide these, then use this option.

- When staffing levels do not permit reassignment, pregnant HCW should be alerted to utilize infection prevention precautions, especially Standard precautions for care of ALL patients as some patients do not have the usual signs and symptoms of infection, including COVID-19. Atypical presentation has been described so it is important to always keep hands clean and use PPE based on the type and nature of care being provided for those who are or are not on isolation precautions.

Additional ways that HCW who are pregnant can reduce their risk:

- Do not skip prenatal care appointments. Based on prevalence of COVID-19 in the community, a telemedicine visit may be an alternative to skipping a prenatal care appointment.

- Limit general interactions with other people as much as possible (social distancing).

- Limit exposure to patients with confirmed COVID-19 as with other infectious cases.

- Maintain at least a 30-day supply of any medications that may be needed.

- Call your healthcare provider if you have any questions related to your health.

- Do not delay seeing emergency care because of COVID-19.

- Practice stress reducing techniques.

References


Clinical Questions about COVID-19: Questions and Answers


If You Are Pregnant, Breastfeeding, or Caring for Young Children

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Infection in Pregnancy