



Health Nexus Weekly Bulletin COVID-19 and Emerging Issues

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WHAT'S NEW ...

PREGNANCY, BIRTH, BREASTFEEDING AND PARENTING - COVID-19

PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCY OF CANADA

As of March 14th, 2020, all Canadian residents should avoid non-essential travel outside of Canada due to COVID-19 Pandemic. It is critical for all Canadian residents to follow Health Canada recommendation. However, if families must travel outside of Canada or are returning to Canada, they need to follow the guidelines listed on the Government of Canada website.

For more information, please visit Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19): Travel Advice at: www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/latest-travel-health-advice.html

In addition, families also need to understand the difference between self-monitoring, self-isolation and isolation in order to keep their members and communities safe. For a detailed description please visit Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19): Prevention and Risks page at: www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/diseases-conditions/self-monitoring-self-isolation-isolation-for-covid-19.html



PREGNANCY AND COVID-19

Update from the Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada (SOGC).

On March 13th, 2020, SOGC released a summary of Updated SOGC Committee Opinion – COVID-19 in Pregnancy. Even though healthy pregnant people are not considered a vulnerable population as per Health Canada* (please follow the link below for the list of vulnerable populations), “due to physiologic changes that occur in pregnancy, when compared with their non-pregnant counterparts, pregnant women with lower respiratory tract infections often experience worse outcomes, including higher rates of hospital and intensive care unit admission” (Elwood et al., 2020).

Currently, there are limited reports available on the effects of COVID-19 on pregnancy, and no evidence suggesting that the effects of COVID-19 on pregnancy and fetal health will be similar to those of SARS and MERS.

To date, there is also no evidence of COVID-19 transmission from expectant parent to an infant, and testing of amniotic fluid, serum, placenta, and breast milk from people with confirmed COVID-19 infection did not find detectable viral DNA, suggesting that transmission of infection during pregnancy or via breast milk is unlikely.

Vertical transmission of infection with COVID-19 has not been associated with abnormal development of the fetus, but due to a limited number of reported cases, “the risk of congenital anomaly associated with COVID-19 cannot be completely excluded” (Elwood et al., 2020).

The complete summary of recommendation on care during pregnancy, birth, postpartum, and care of the newborn can be found here:

<https://sogc.org/en/content/featured-news/Updated-SOGC-Committee-Opinion-%20COVID-19-in-Pregnancy.asp>

* www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/diseases-conditions/vulnerable-populations-covid-19.html

BREASTFEEDING AND COVID-19



Update from the Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine (ABM).

On March 10th, ABM also issued a statement on COVID-19. Up to date, it is unknown whether COVID-19 can be spread via breast milk from parent to infant. “In limited studies on women with COVID-19 and another coronavirus infection, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV), the virus has not been detected in breast milk; however, we do not know whether mothers with COVID-19 can transmit the virus via breast milk” (Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine, 2020).

It is important to note that the decision to breastfeed is an individual decision. Currently, there are no direct recommendations to avoid breastfeeding with a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19.

However, parents with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 infection should exercise all necessary measures to prevent the spread of infection when breastfeeding (and/or expressing breast milk) or caring for an infant.

A detailed list of IPAC measures at home and in a hospital setting for breastfeeding parents can be found here:

<https://www.bfmed.org/abm-statement-coronavirus>

World Health Organizations (WHO) on Breastfeeding and Skin-to-Skin Contact.

WHO posted a short note on LinkedIn for parents with COVID-19 who breastfeed and do skin-to-skin contact, suggesting three core practices:

- Respiratory hygiene, incl. during feeding.
- Hand hygiene before & after contact with a child.
- Routinely clean and disinfect contact surfaces.

Check it out:

https://www.linkedin.com/posts/world-health-organization_covid19-activity-6645837367192150016-E11m/



COVID-19 AND CARE FOR PREGNANT WOMEN IN A HOSPITAL SETTING

On March 12th, 2020, the **Center for Disease Control (CDC)** hosted a webinar on COVID-19 infection prevention and control measures for clinicians caring for children and pregnant women in inpatient obstetric healthcare settings. Despite limited evidence and reports available on specific presentations of COVID-19 in pregnant women, CDC still states that pregnancy should be considered an at-risk episode for strategies focusing on the prevention and management of COVID-19.

The summary of pre-hospital recommendations emphasizes the importance of informing the primary maternity care team, birth centre, obstetrical unit, emergency department, and IPAC team prior to the arrival of pregnant people with a confirmed case of COVID-19 or awaiting COVID-19 testing results.

In the hospital, the staff and clinicians should treat pregnant patients with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 infection according to existing IPAC protocols for COVID-19.

At the same time, infants from a parent with a confirmed case of COVID-19 should be considered as patients under investigation and should be isolated and cared for according to the IPAC guidelines.

Healthcare facilities should exercise all available measures to reduce the possibility of transmission of COVID-19 from an infected parent to a newborn.

For more information and webinar recording, please visit the CDC website at: https://emergency.cdc.gov/coca/calls/2020/callinfo_031220.asp

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (WHO) UPDATE

On March 13th, 2020, **WHO** has issued interim guidance for clinicians taking care of hospitalized adult and paediatric patients with confirmed or suspected COVID-19. The guideline contains detailed information on maternal and infant care pre- and post-delivery.

Please visit WHO website for more information: [www.who.int/publications-detail/clinical-management-of-severe-acute-respiratory-infection-when-novel-coronavirus-\(ncov\)-infection-is-suspected](http://www.who.int/publications-detail/clinical-management-of-severe-acute-respiratory-infection-when-novel-coronavirus-(ncov)-infection-is-suspected)

COVID-19 PREVENTION

REMEMBER - PREVENTION IS THE BEST TREATMENT!

On March 11th, 2020, **WHO** had declared COVID-9 as a pandemic. www.who.int/dg/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-

[media-briefing-on-covid-19---11-march-2020](#)

Preventing the spread of COVID-19 is the best treatment and everyone should take necessary measures, especially when caring for children and infants.

In February 2020, **Public Health Ontario** issued a summary sheet on how to self-isolate and care for people with a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19.

Follow the link to find out more:

www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/factsheet-covid-19-guide-isolation-caregivers.pdf?la=en

Here, at **Health Nexus**, we are committed to taking an active role in preventing the spread of COVID-19.

We have implemented new ways of greeting, including elbow and food bump, and practiced these precautions at our Annual Conference on March 5-6th, 2020.

In addition, we are dedicated to assisting our staff in implementing social distancing, while not compromising on our commitment to support the population we serve by providing the most current evidence and research in the area of pregnancy, birth and the early years.

Health Nexus will continue to exercise all necessary precautions according to Health Canada and WHO until further notice.

COVID-19 RELATED RESOURCES, EVENTS AND LINKS

EDUCATE YOURSELF!

SafelyFed Canada has put together a list of links and resources on breastfeeding.

<http://safelyfed.ca/covid19-resources/>

Toronto Region COVID-19 – Recommendations for Management of Pregnant Women and Neonates with Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19 issued on March 18, 2020.

<https://www.pcmch.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Toronto-Region-COVID-19-Management-of-pregnant-women-and-neonates-with-suspected-or-confirmed-COVID-March-17-2020-1.pdf>

Important resources for parents and caregivers are also available on the *Caring for Kids* website by the **Canadian Pediatric Society**. The website hosts a wide range of information on health promotion activities, parenting and safety recommendations for parents and children from birth to teenage years, including information on COVID-19 relevant to families.

Refer parents to the website by visiting:

www.caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/the-2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19

CDC information on COVID-19 and pregnancy, birth, infant care and breastfeeding.
www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/pregnancy-breastfeeding.html

HOW FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES CAN COPE WITH SOCIAL DISTANCING AND ISOLATION

“FAMILIES WHO PLAY TOGETHER STAY TOGETHER”!

During this critical time for us to exercise social distancing and isolation, and cope with the state of emergency in Ontario related to COVID-19, **Health Nexus** is well equipped to support communities and families across Canada and internationally with valuable evidence-informed Best Start resources and knowledge mobilization for parents and caregivers to meaningfully engage with children and continue learning and development at home.

Early Years, Child and Family providers can share the following Best Start resources with relevant stakeholders, families and caregivers to support children while at home:

- [Healthy Baby Healthy Brain](#) – Tips for Parents include tip sheet around physical safety at home and activities for healthy brain development for children ages 0-36 months.
- [Learning to Play & Playing to Learn](#) booklet is a resource for everyone who cares for children and is based on the research of what, how, and when a child learns, and filled with up-to-date information, helpful tips, checklists, links to other resources. These tools will help parents and caregivers to support the child’s individual growth and development.
- [Have a Ball Together](#) is a bilingual website for anyone caring for young children with facts, tips and tools to promote and support physical activity for young children. It has valuable resources on how to support physical activity at home.
- [Daddy and Me on the Move](#) is a resource for families, in particular fathers, on how to build strong father-child relationships with kids 0-6 years old.

If you have questions on how to support families and children on social isolation, please reach out to one of our Health Promotion Consultant via beststart@healthnexus.ca.

NEWS ON HEALTHY BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

World Health Organization (WHO) Guideline on Improving Early Childhood

Development.

At Health Nexus, we are all very excited to see the new WHO Guideline on Improving Early Childhood Development, released a couple of weeks ago!

The guide provides direction for strengthening policies and programs to better address early childhood development and contains four recommendations aimed at caregivers, health professionals and other workers who can assist families, as well as policy-makers and other stakeholders.

The recommendations relate to:

- Providing responsive care during the first three years of life.
- Providing activities for early learning during the first three years of life.
- Including responsive care and early learning as part of interventions for optimal nutrition of infants and young children.
- Integrating psychosocial interventions to support maternal mental health into early childhood health and development services.

The strategies incorporated in the guideline support the collaborative initiatives which Health Nexus started to explore and implement with its stakeholders.

For complete guidelines, please visit the WHO website at:

<https://www.who.int/publications-detail/improving-early-childhood-development-who-guideline>

Health Nexus - Building Healthy Brains Initiative.

Building Healthy Brains initiative is designed to generate local, provincial and national impact and support families, communities and care providers with the most current, evidence-informed practices to help children have the very best start.

Since 2019, Health Nexus has been working with community partners including the Canadian Council for Substance Use and Addictions (CCSA), the Ontario's ACE's coalition, the Alberta Family Wellness Initiative, and other community partners to consider strategic approaches to building healthy brain strategies into human services programming. Following an initial consultation in November 2019, on March 5-6, 2020, Health Nexus and an inter-disciplinary team produced a 350-person consultation where community members, researchers, and human services leaders exchanged ideas on how to spread evidence-based approaches, develop resources and take actions to build healthy brains in Canadian communities.

Currently, Health Nexus is synthesizing the data collected from participants during the conference and will be working with partners to develop recommendations on local, provincial and national next steps.

Stay tuned for details and contact us if you want to get involved!

THANK YOU TO ALL HEALTH CARE AND PUBLIC HEALTH PROVIDERS

Thank You!

Health Nexus would also like to send special thank you and appreciation to all Health Care and Public Health providers who work on the front lines and help keep Canadians safe!

For decades, Health Nexus has been a part of a large family of professionals who make the health of families, mothers, and children their first and foremost priority.

Without you, it would have been impossible for us to fulfill our mission, and once again, we see you provide care for those greatly in need and contribute to our collective goal of building healthy sustainable communities.

Thank you for all your dedication and hard work!

Health Nexus Team

Visit [our resources page](#) to discover all our many evidence-based, up-to-date resources!



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