Pregnant women need to guard against coronavirus

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(HealthDay)—Pregnant women with COVID-19 may be susceptible to

pregnancy complications, an obstetrician-gynecologist says.

Pregnant women have physiologic changes in their chests that may make them more susceptible to viral respiratory infections, according to Justin Brandt. He's assistant professor of obstetrics and gynecology in the division of maternal-fetal medicine at Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School in New Jersey.

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and the U.K.'s National Health Service are concerned that women might be more prone to miscarriage, preterm birth and fetal growth restriction if they have COVID-19.

Pregnant women who think they're infected "should call their obstetrician and let them know their concerns. If symptoms are severe, they may need to be evaluated in the hospital," Brandt said in a Rutgers news release.

"However, most women, even if pregnant, have mild symptoms and likely will not have to seek medical attention. My colleagues and I are triaging these calls over the phone to ensure that potentially ill patients are evaluated at the hospital while most are staying home," Brandt said.

"Patients at home with mild symptoms need to self-quarantine for a minimum of 14 days. They should not go to their routine prenatal visits until they have spoken to their doctor's office and received instructions. We are encouraging our patients to be forthcoming with symptoms when they call, even mild symptoms, so we can ensure patients get optimal care," he added.

Most reports suggest that there is a low risk of the coronavirus being transmitted from an infected mother to her fetus, but there is some research suggesting that some newborns of mothers with COVID-19

have [coronavirus](#)-specific antibodies, suggesting they were exposed to the virus in the womb.

"We need more data to clarify and corroborate this risk, but there may be reason to worry about vertical transmission and associated conditions, including birth defects, early neonatal disease and other complications," Brandt said.

To reduce their risk of infection, [pregnant women](#) should practice social distancing, stay home and avoid public gatherings. If they must leave home, they should wash their hands regularly, try not to touch their face, and stay at least six feet from people who may be sick or people whose statuses are unknown, Brandt advised.

He said expectant parents should prepare to be home for several months and be stocked up on food, common medicines including Tylenol, thermometers and other [household items](#) such as soap, toilet paper and washing detergent.

When possible, use delivery services rather than going to markets and other stores where there may be groups of people.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on the [coronavirus and pregnancy](#).

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