

New research finds severity of COVID-19 determines likelihood of pregnancy complications

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Pregnant women who contract SARS-CoV-2, the strain of the virus that causes COVID-19, are at greater risk of dying and experiencing serious complications compared to nonpregnant women who contract the

disease, according to a recent report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Now, in a new study to be presented today at the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine's (SMFM) [annual meeting](#), The Pregnancy Meeting, researchers will unveil findings that suggest that [pregnant women](#) who become severely or critically ill due to COVID-19 are at greater risk of dying and experiencing serious pregnancy complications compared to pregnant women who have COVID-19 but were asymptomatic, or without symptoms. In contrast, pregnant women with mild or moderate illness were not at higher risk of pregnancy complications than those without symptoms. The study was funded by the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.

The study examined [medical records](#) of 1,219 pregnant women from 33 hospitals in 14 states from March 1, 2020 to July 31, 2020. All patients tested positive for COVID-19; 47 percent were asymptomatic, 27 percent were mild, 14 percent were moderate, 8 percent were severe, and 4 percent were critical.

Findings showed that pregnant women who become severely or critically ill due to COVID-19 were older, had a higher body mass index, and were more likely to have underlying medical conditions, such as asthma/chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), diabetes, and high blood pressure. These women were more likely to die or have serious complications, such as cesarean delivery; heavy bleeding after giving birth, known as postpartum hemorrhage; [high blood pressure](#) during pregnancy; and preterm birth. High blood pressure and preterm birth also have the potential to cause long-term health problems in women or their infants.

A total of four women (0.3%) died due to COVID-19, a figure that is higher than the death rate for pregnant women without COVID-19. The

death rate for pregnant women without COVID-19 is 17.4 deaths per 100,000 live births, according to the latest data from the CDC.

"Our research shows that serious pregnancy complications appear to occur in women who have severe or critical cases of COVID and not those who have mild or moderate cases," said the study's lead author, Torri D. Metz, MD, MS, a maternal-fetal medicine subspecialist and associate professor at the University of Utah Health.

"This information helps us to counsel our patients more effectively. For pregnant [women](#) who have contracted a mild or moderate case of COVID-19, these findings can help to alleviate their fears that they are at an increased risk of having serious [pregnancy](#) complications due to the disease."

Provided by Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine

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