

Pandemic Pregnancy Precautions

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Abstract

While pregnancy is a low-immunity condition, there is no evidence to suggest that pregnant women are at a greater risk of contracting Covid-19. However, it is imperative that pregnant women take extra safety precautions during these pandemic times. Wearing a face mask in public, periodic hand washing, using sanitisers when soap is not available, maintaining social distance and avoiding travel whenever possible are some of the important safety measures they can take.

It is a fact though that the virus affects pregnant women with diabetes or asthma much more severely. Given the recent rise in cases, it has been observed that pregnant women, especially those above 35 years of age, are more vulnerable to Covid-19 in their third trimester, and at the fag end of their pregnancy or if they have pre-existing medical conditions like kidney disease, high BP, obesity or diabetes.

Introduction

The high number of Covid-19 cases nationwide is worrying. Of late, there has been increasing concern among pregnant mothers on whether to take the Covid-19 vaccine. A pregnant woman's condition may deteriorate rapidly because the expansion of the uterus as the pregnancy progresses affects lung expansion. Thus, pregnant women who are Covid-19 positive, are often observed in the hospital until they fully recover. When a woman gets pregnant, her body immediately changes to accommodate the baby's health and safety. Post vaccination side effects in pregnant women, such as soreness, headache, nausea and fever are generally manageable and harmless to mother and baby and the effects will subside within a couple of days.

If needed, the doctor will prescribe paracetamol for the pregnant mother to cope with the discomfort. "Please don't confuse these conditions with allergies. An allergy may cause an anaphylactic shock which involves your face becoming swollen and you have sudden difficulty in breathing as your throat closes up," she adds. A slight discomfort post vaccination is still much better than not getting vaccinated at all, she stresses.

Pregnancy During Covid 19

As per WHO, Pregnant women or recently pregnant women who are older, overweight, and have pre-existing medical conditions such as hypertension and diabetes seem to have an increased risk of developing severe COVID-19. Due to changes in their bodies and immune systems, we know that pregnant women can be badly affected by some respiratory infections. It is therefore important that they take precautions to protect themselves against COVID-19, and report possible symptoms (including fever, cough or difficulty in breathing) to their healthcare provide

Motherhood is a life-changing experience that comes with its own set of struggles. Similarly, the Coronavirus pandemic is a life-changing phenomenon that has affected every human life around the world. People are tense, scared and paranoid thinking about the current situation. This situation is even more delicate for pregnant women. Mothers may have to tackle a lot of mental pressure at this time due to the sensitivity of the situation and their pregnancy. Pregnant women should be well aware of maintaining mental health during the lockdown period. They should be ready to recognise the signs of depression and seek professional help for that. So, always check with your doctor to maintain your mental well-being.

Nutrition In Pregnancy During COVID-19 Pandemic

1. At present there is no evidence that pregnant women are at a higher risk of COVID-19 compared to the general population, thus, pregnant women must take the same precautions to avoid COVID-19 infection as other people and report possible symptoms (including fever, cough or difficulty in breathing) to their healthcare provider.
2. Nutrition recommendations for pregnant women remain unchanged, even during COVID-19.
 - Eat at least three main meals, with one nutritious snack (in the first trimester) and two nutritious snacks in the second and third trimester.
 - Each meal must comprise one item from energy giving foods (cereals, fats and sugar), bodybuilding (pulses and legumes, nuts, milk and milk products, eggs, meat, fish and poultry) and protective foods (vegetables and fruits).
 - Continue daily dose of micronutrient supplements (iron and calcium)
 - Check status and seek appropriate advice for low/high gestational weight gain and severe anemia during antenatal visit.
 - Stay hydrated (Drink at least 8-10 glasses of water or fluids per day).
 - Take rest for 2 hours in the day and sleep for 8 hours at night.
 - Do at least 20-25 minutes of physical activity every day.
 - Intake of caffeine, alcohol, tobacco and other addictive substances should be restricted. They are harmful for the baby and also negatively influence immunity.
 - Nutrition Tips for Pregnant Women During Monsoon Season
3. Most important precaution is to exercise here, in addition to respiratory hygiene; maintaining hygiene while purchasing, cooking and storing food by self and food handlers at home.
4. You can continue to eat non-vegetarian food and eggs. It does not increase risk of

acquiring COVID-19 infection. Precaution to be exercised is to ensure non-vegetarian food is thoroughly cooked.

5. No food can be designated as a super food to prevent or cure CoVID in pregnancy.

Although several foods rich in antioxidant nutrients (Vitamin C, Vitamin E and Vitamin A), Iron, Protein, Zinc and Selenium and omega 3 and omega 6 fatty acids boost immunity. These include:

- 1) Dark green leafy vegetables, amaranth leaves, fenugreek leaves, spinach etc.
- 2) Vitamin C rich foods: lemon, amaranth leaves, orange, melon, gooseberries, etc.
- 3) Yellow-orange fruits & vegetables carrot, papaya, mango, etc.
- 4) Nuts, almonds, walnuts, coconut (dry), gingelly seeds, safflower seeds, sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds, flaxseeds, chia seeds, poppy seeds, Niger seeds, mustard seeds etc.)
- 5) Millets bajra, ragi, jowar etc.
- 6) Whole pulses and legumes bengal gram (whole), horse gram (whole), green gram (whole), rajma, soyabean etc.
- 7) Egg & Non-Veg Meats, chicken, fish and egg
- 8) Milk and milk products curd, paneer
- 9) Omega 3& 6 fatty acids rich oil safflower oil, sunflower oil, corn oil, soybean oil etc.
- 10) Herbs, spices and condiments garlic, ginger, black pepper, turmeric, cloves, basil/Tulsi.

Hence, ensuring that pregnant women eat foods rich in these nutrients is vital.

- 1) omega-3 fatty acid: fish or marine sources, flaxseeds, walnuts
- 2) folic acid: fish, rajma, soyabean, spinach, field beans, mustard leaves, beetroot and mango ripe.
- 3) vitamin B12: milk, egg, chicken, salmon.
- 4) vitamin B6: Rohu fish, sunflower seeds, drumstick leaves, walnut, black gram whole, banana, lentil whole, french beans.
- 5) While at present, there is no evidence of food or food packaging being associated with the transmission of coronavirus disease (COVID-19), it may be possible that people can become infected by touching a surface or object contaminated by the virus and then touching their face. Maintain extra

precautions for food hygiene while purchasing, cooking and storing food by self and food handlers at home

- 6) Be alert for danger signs of CoVID or any obstetric emergency and seek care.

Limit your exposure to news about COVID-19

It is fine to be curious to know about what's going on in the country. But exposing yourself to COVID-19 news will only increase your anxiety which might have adverse effects on the baby. Furthermore, a great deal of fake news continues to circulate, resulting in the spread of false facts. So, try to get COVID-19 updates on a regular basis from reputable blogs, news portals, and government announcements only. And keep yourself away as much as possible from the discussions about the pandemic with your friends and family.

Conclusion

Chances of transmission of Covid infection from mother to foetus are least likely (there have been very few case reports), and a majority of the patients have had uneventful pregnancies with healthy babies. Caesarean delivery may be the preferred mode of delivery in a majority of hospitals though data available presently indicate caesarean for only obstetric indications. There is a serious awareness gap for adequate maternity care at this time. In the absence of such formal data, the pandemic's potential for negative mental health effects should be recognised as a serious public health issue, with adequate treatment and assistance to avoid and mitigate any negative.

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