

Safer Baby Bundle

WORKING TOGETHER TO REDUCE STILLBIRTH



A message for pregnant women and their families from the Safer Baby Bundle team in light of the COVID-19 pandemic

Pregnant women have a higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19 compared to non-pregnant women, and their babies also have a higher risk of stillbirth and of being born prematurely. Pregnant women are a priority group for COVID-19 vaccination and should be routinely offered vaccination with the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines at any stage of pregnancy. These vaccines are safe for pregnant women and they reduce the risks for women and their babies.

We appreciate that social distancing has meant that there have been changes to the way pregnancy care is provided to women. We also understand that pregnant women are anxious about COVID-19 and this concern may lead them to avoid seeking care to reduce their risk of contracting the infection.

The Safer Baby Bundle team along with the Australian College of Midwives (ACM) and the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RANZCOG) are monitoring the evolving COVID-19 situation very closely. We continue to access expertise, in Australia, including from the Australian Government and internationally, to provide ongoing guidance during this time.

The following fact sheet is designed to ensure women are still receiving important messages about stillbirth prevention from their healthcare providers during the COVID-19 pandemic. The fact sheet complements the information and advice contained in the Safer Baby Bundle (SBB) eLearning module (learning.stillbirthcre.org.au) and highlights where recommendations in the SBB eLearning module have been changed in light of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Additional Information

Information and advice for the non-pregnant population applies equally to pregnant women. The Safer Baby Bundle team recommends the following websites as reliable sources of information for pregnant women and their families in Australia:

- health.gov.au
- learn.stillbirthcre.org.au
- midwives.org.au
- ranzcog.edu.au

Disclaimer

The Stillbirth CRE, ACM and RANZCOG commentary on COVID-19 should be considered advisory and not prescriptive, and all healthcare workers and the general public should heed the advice of government and health authorities.



The Royal Australian
and New Zealand
College of Obstetricians
and Gynaecologists
Excellence in Women's Health

For more information about the Safer Baby Bundle program and to access the elearning resources for health care professionals go to learn.stillbirthcre.org.au

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Decreased Fetal Movements

Effect on recommendations during COVID-19:

No change.

Message for women:

- Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, monitoring your baby's movements is important.
- Please call your healthcare provider immediately if concerned and come in to be assessed.
- The use of at-home Doppler ultrasound to listen to your baby's heart rate as a way of checking your baby's health is not based on good research and is not recommended. Your baby's movements are the most reliable way to know your baby is well.

Sleep on Side

Effect on recommendations during COVID-19:

No change.

Message for women:

- Going to sleep on your side from 28 weeks' gestation is safest, do not worry if you wake up on your back, settle to sleep on your side again. During the COVID-19 pandemic, this is an important step that women can take to reduce the risk of stillbirth.

Fetal Growth Restriction

Effect on recommendations during COVID-19:

Symphysis fundal height (SFH) will not be measured if your appointment is via telehealth instead of face-to-face.

Message for women:

- While face-to-face appointments are kept to a minimum through telehealth, assessment of your baby's growth by SFH measurement or ultrasound scan will continue to be part of routine antenatal care.
- Monitoring baby's movements is an important indicator of fetal wellbeing.
- If something doesn't feel right, or if you feel like your baby is not growing appropriately, please contact your healthcare provider.

Smoking

Effect on recommendations during COVID-19:

Smokerlyzers are not recommended. To limit transfer of the COVID-19 infection, use of smokerlyzers (CO monitors) is not recommended. However, the 'Ask, Advise, Help' model can still be used to support women to stop smoking in pregnancy.

Message for women:

- Smoking may increase the severity of COVID-19 infection. Stopping smoking in pregnancy is important for both you and your baby, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic because COVID-19 affects the respiratory system and smoking increases the risk of respiratory illness.
- Help is available to help you and your partner to stop smoking in pregnancy. Talk to your midwife or doctor and seek additional help from Quitline.

Timing of Birth

Effect on recommendations during COVID-19:

No change.

Message for women:

- The risk of having a stillborn baby is small for most women and there are ways to reduce the risk even further.
- Your healthcare provider will talk with you about your own risk for having a stillborn baby and discuss with you steps you can take to reduce the risks such as being aware of your baby's movements and sleeping on your side.
- For some women, particularly those with risk factors for stillbirth or other obstetric indications, having the baby earlier than the due date might be best.
- Currently, maternal COVID-19 infection is considered a risk factor for stillbirth, and may be a reason for early planned birth should there be immediate risks to the woman's or baby's health.
- Avoiding early planned birth unless clearly clinically indicated will minimise risk of neonatal complications.