

Topic
Public Health and Covid-19
Potential impact of Covid-19 in this topic area
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Public health is about helping people to stay healthy and protecting them from threats to their health.• During the current pandemic it is important to remain vigilant around maintaining public health messages
Current key guidance for this topic – clinical care and advice for women
Smoking Evidence from the pandemic so far indicates that people who smoke are at much higher risk of becoming seriously unwell if they contract COVID-19. It is therefore particularly important to support women and their partners to stop smoking. Quitting smoking in pregnancy can make a significant difference to birth outcomes, reducing the risk of stillbirth, low birth weight and sudden infant death. As a result of the COVID-19 outbreak some stop smoking interventions have been reduced or suspended. Women should be reminded of the risks and have access to support to quit through video calling, texts and timely provision of nicotine replacement therapy. Refresh your 'Very Brief Advice' technique on smoking in pregnancy with RCM i-Learn: https://www.ilearn.rcm.org.uk/course/info.php?id=259 Resources <i>NHS guidance on quitting smoking</i> https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/quit-smoking/?tabname=advice-and-support <i>NHS guidance on smoking during pregnancy</i> https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/smoking-pregnant/ Financial hardship and social inclusion The COVID-19 has triggered changes to employment that could cause financial hardship. Support and advice may be found from the UK government and 3 rd sector agencies. Resources <i>UK government guidance for those affected by COVID</i> https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/support-for-those-affected-by-covid-19/support-for-those-affected-by-covid-19 <i>Citizens Advice on COVID</i> https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/health/coronavirus-what-it-means-for-you/ <i>Trussell Trust advice on emergency assistance getting food</i> https://www.trusselltrust.org/get-help/emergency-food/ <i>Government assistance for vulnerable individuals</i> https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-extremely-vulnerable <i>Shelter advice for people facing urgent housing issues</i> https://england.shelter.org.uk/ <i>Maternity Action advice on employment rights including for pregnant women</i> https://maternityaction.org.uk/advice-line/

Domestic Abuse

Measures to control the spread of COVID-19 have brought about social distancing and isolation that means some people will be more vulnerable to domestic abuse. Agencies are reporting a rise in incidents linked with COVID 19 and extra vigilance is therefore necessary, especially where face to face appointments are being reduced or undertaken virtually. It is vitally important that midwives are responsive to requests for confidential advice. Consider precautionary measures for families with known risk factors.

Refresh your knowledge with RCM i-learn

<https://www.ilearn.rcm.org.uk/course/info.php?id=633>

Resources

Advice and information

TUC domestic abuse and coronavirus learning tool <https://learning.elucidat.com/course/5e875ae4d0715-5e8c6417dfc28>

Women's Aid COVID resource hub <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/covid-19-resource-hub/>

Getting help

National Domestic Abuse Helpline - 0808 2000 247 or [online contact form](#).

National LGBT+ Domestic Abuse Helpline – 0800 999 5428

Women's Aid [webchat](#) [Available Monday 10am -12pm]

Rape Crisis services - 0808 802 9999 – or [webchat](#)

Nations specific

Scotland 24-hour helpline: 0800 027 1234; *Scottish women's aid* <https://womensaid.scot/>

Northern Ireland 24-hour helpline: 0808 802 1414 *Northern Ireland* <https://www.womensaidni.org/>

Wales 24-hour helpline 0808 80 10 800: *Welsh women's aid* <https://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk>

Infant feeding

There is currently no clinical evidence to suggest that the virus can be transmitted through breastmilk. Infection can be spread to the baby in the same way as to anyone in close contact with you. The benefits of breastfeeding outweigh any potential risks of transmission of the virus through breastmilk or by being in close contact with your child, however, this will be an individual decision and can be discussed with your midwife, health visitor or GP by telephone. If you wish to breastfeed, take precautions to limit the potential spread of Covid-19 to the baby

- Handwashing before touching the baby, breast pump or bottles
- Avoid coughing or sneezing on the baby while feeding
- Wear a facemask while feeding or caring for the baby, where available
- Where a breast pump is used, follow recommendations for cleaning after each use
- Consider asking someone who is well to feed the baby
- For babies who are bottle fed with formula or expressed milk, strict adherence to sterilisation guidelines is advised
- Where mothers are expressing breastmilk in hospital, a dedicated breast pump should be used

Resources

NHS guidance on breastfeeding <https://www.nhs.uk/start4life/baby/breastfeeding/>

NHS guidance on express and bottle feeding <https://www.nhs.uk/start4life/baby/breastfeeding/expressing-and-bottle-feeding/bottle-feeding/>

Breast feeding network <https://www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/>

<https://www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly/infant-feeding-during-the-covid-19-outbreak/>

NCT helpline 0300 330 0700

Parents club Scotland <https://www.parentclub.scot/>

Exercise

Whether socially isolating or distancing, continuing to exercise in pregnancy is vitally important to maintaining a healthy weight, good circulation and mental wellbeing. Many safe exercise routines are suitable for the home, such as yoga. Encourage exercise and consider including tips and suggestions when running virtual antenatal classes.

Resources

Resources

NHS guidance on exercise during pregnancy <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/pregnancy-exercise/>

Tommy's guidance on exercise during pregnancy <https://www.tommys.org/pregnancy-information/im-pregnant/exercise-pregnancy/exercise-faqs/it-safe-exercise-pregnancy>

Nutrition

A balanced diet is important and with some products in short supply, women may find they are looking for replacements for fresh foods. Suggest frozen vegetables, such as spinach or broccoli, dried and tinned fruits. Experimenting with new cereals, wholegrains and natural yogurt can provide essential fibre, vitamins and minerals. For families that qualify, signpost to Healthy Start for vitamin supplements and additional financial support. For women who are particularly vulnerable to coronavirus due to an underlying condition such as heart or lung disease, signpost to government registration for assistance, which can include assistance with food delivery.

Resources

NHS guidance on pregnancy and diet <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/healthy-pregnancy-diet/>

NHS guidance on healthy eating in pregnancy <https://www.nhs.uk/start4life/pregnancy/healthy-eating-pregnancy/>

Healthy Start UK <https://www.healthystart.nhs.uk/>

Government assistance for vulnerable individuals <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-extremely-vulnerable>

Infection control

Access to detailed guidance on hygiene and infection control, in general and in healthcare settings.

Resources

NHS guidance on COVID infection control <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

NHS general guidance on infection control <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/how-to-prevent-germs-from-spreading/>

UK government guidance on COVID prevention and control <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-infection-prevention-and-control>

References and links to online and virtual support and guidance

Public Health and Covid-19

Public Health England <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health-england>

Health Protection Scotland <https://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/>

Public Health Wales <https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/latest-information-on-novel-coronavirus-covid-19/>

Public Health Agency Northern Ireland <https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/news/covid-19-coronavirus>