

## Bringing Your Newborn Home in 2021

Having a baby is usually an exciting, happy time. But it can also be a little overwhelming going home from the hospital, and that was before the added concern of doing so during a pandemic. While this is an emotional time and may not bring the “new baby” experience you had planned for, you can still safely celebrate and enjoy this precious time at home with your little one. And now with the development of safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines, there is an added layer of protection and peace of mind as your little one enters the world.

Dr. Melinda Weiss, an OB/GYN with OSF HealthCare, offers advice for bringing your little one home from the hospital during a pandemic.

“Number one: Don’t panic. Number two: Don’t panic. And then moving on after that, I think a healthy dose of caution and nervousness is very normal in both new parents and seasoned parents alike. I would say just use common sense to a degree and just be mindful of your exposure and your level of risk,” says Dr. Weiss.

She adds that ensuring the people who come around your newborn have been vaccinated against COVID-19 is something to pay close attention to – however, the vaccine does not mean you and your newborn are out of the woods completely.

“Hopefully it helps people feel more protected, but I would still suggest being cautious when you are around other adults who have not been vaccinated or out in public and things like that – and remember to use good hand hygiene, wearing masks, and taking precautions to make sure you and baby stay protected,” Dr. Weiss adds.

Mary Grimm, BSN, RN CNML, the manager of the mother/baby unit at OSF HealthCare Little Company of Mary Medical Center, adds to this, stating that these safety measures are crucial to ensure the protection of the newest addition to your family.

“The three most important things that we need to do are follow the three W’s – so wearing our mask, watching our social distance and one of the most important is washing our hands. So whether it’s with soap and water or with an approved hand sanitizer, those are all safe to use and you want to use those any time prior to handling your baby. Picking the baby up to feed, changing the diaper, just going to hug your baby – make sure anyone who is going to handle your baby uses an approved hand sanitizer or uses good old soap and water to wash their hands,” says Grimm.

When it comes to allowing grandparents and other adults to meet and spend time with your newborn, Dr. Weiss advises to utilize caution when allowing visitors, and to take advantage of this special bonding time with your newborn. However, the decision to allow grandparents and others into your home is ultimately up to you.

“If grandparents are vaccinated and you feel comfortable that they have been social distancing themselves, I think it’s okay and reasonable to have them come over and meet the newborn – as long as the parents and immediate family with the baby are ready for that. I always do suggest that as much as grandparents and other adults want to visit, it’s also really good to have your own private time with your newborn and learn your new normal. But also the more hands on deck you have to give the baby more love and to get some help – that’s really good, too,” Dr. Weiss explains.

Another thing to be mindful of is your newborn’s older siblings – especially if they are leaving home every day to go to and from school, sports, or other activities. While older siblings are considered a part of your family’s “[bubble](#),” it is important to put measures in place to keep germs at bay.

“The same thing for them – washing their hands, if they are going to cough or sneeze always turn away from the baby. I think most children have done very well about coughing into their elbow. But again, the most important thing for siblings to do is hand washing. If they’re going back to school and they’re coming home from school, again, wash your hands before you come and greet your new brother or sister,” Grimm adds.

So you have taken all of the proper safety precautions possibly in order to keep your newborn safe, but you are still afraid to bring your little one home. What now?

“Welcome to parenthood. You are going to be anxious and panicked about everything from here on out – until your child is an adult and everything. Unfortunately there is no way to eliminate risk overall, so just do the best you can. And if you are concerned or if baby shows any signs of illness or anything that you are worried about, luckily we have great teams in place. You can always reach out to your OB/GYN or pediatrician who can help guide you – and if they determine that baby needs to be evaluated, there is always someone there,” advises Dr. Weiss.

Both Dr. Weiss and Grimm agree: vaccinations against COVID-19 are an important tool to help end the pandemic. Currently, anyone 16 and older is eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, and can now self-schedule a COVID-19 vaccination at [osfhealthcare.org/vaccine](https://www.osfhealthcare.org/vaccine). To find an OB/GYN or other healthcare provider for you or your newborn, go to [www.osfhealthcare.org](https://www.osfhealthcare.org).