

Bringing Your Newborn Home during a Pandemic

Having a baby is usually an exciting, happy time. But it also can 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.

Mary Grimm, BSN, RN CNML, Mother/Baby Nurse Manager, OSF HealthCare

“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.” (:29)

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that everyone two years and older wear a mask that covers their nose and mouth. The CDC advises NOT to put masks on babies or children younger than two years. Big brothers and sisters who have a new baby in the house will be excited to hold and play with their sibling. While Grimm doesn’t discourage this interaction, she says it is important to have older siblings follow the same safety measures.

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“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.” (:21)

If you are debating whether or not to venture out to your local grocery store with your newborn, Grimm recommends to stay home. Utilize a delivery service, family member or friend to assist with errands so that you can stay home as much as possible and avoid unnecessary exposure to germs.

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“Try to avoid taking your baby to any crowded places – grocery stores, malls, things like that – because the risk of exposure is so much greater the closer we are to people. And these are people who may have been exposed and may be carrying the virus and are asymptomatic. So work with your support person, daddy, a close family member that you know is healthy to see if they can stay with your baby. Or even better yet, let them go do the grocery shopping for you.” (:26)

Virtual meet-and-greets via online platforms are recommended for introducing your friends and family to the newest addition to your family. In a pre-COVID world, your home may have been bustling with activity and filled with people coming and going throughout the day, loved ones should offer to be present in other ways to help ease the stress on mom and dad.

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“Avoid a lot of visitors. Really screen your visitors. Anyone who you feel is essential to come, fine. A lot of people want to come and bring gifts to the baby. One of the best gifts they can do though is to go get your groceries, bring them to you. Maybe put a basket of dirty laundry out on the front porch and they can pick that up and do the laundry for you. Take advantage of people’s good intentions. They want to be there for you and help you.” (:22)

Grimm explains that one positive aspect of having minimal to no visitors at your home allows for extra time to bond with your newborn. It important to remember the main goal: keeping both you and your new baby safe and healthy.

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“One aspect not to neglect is your follow-up care – for yourself to see your OB provider post-delivery at whatever time he or she has scheduled for you to come back in for a follow-up and also for your baby’s well-baby checks. So most pediatricians and family practice providers, depending who you’ve chosen to go to, have separate days or office times for well-baby checks. And they have lots of practices in their offices where they may have you wait in your car until the room has been cleaned and disinfected and you call and then you come up to the office.” (:29)

To learn more about delivering your baby at an OSF HealthCare facility, go to <https://www.osfhealthcare.org/covid19/updates/pregnancy/>.