

Johnson County OB/GYN

Coping with anxiety about COVID-19 during pregnancy and postpartum

It is important for us to recognize that many of us have normal concerns and worries about our health and safety. What we see and hear can add huge amounts of stress, anxiety and worry. This can be even more frightening when it happens during pregnancy and after delivering a baby. We do know that moms who have a history of anxiety and depression are at a greater risk of experiencing postpartum anxiety and depression after delivery.

Voicing your concerns: We are here to listen if you have anxiety about our current situation with COVID-19 and pregnancy. Although we may not have all the answers at this time, your concerns are valid and we will work through it together.

Is it normal to worry? Yes, it is normal and okay to worry. This is an uncertain time and information is constantly changing. Our routines and lives have been disrupted by all the interventions to slow the spread of this virus down. Suddenly, sharing your baby with family has become a challenge due to social distancing. Restrictions at the hospital make this experience different than the one you had pictured, and you worry if it's even safe to go to the store or to a doctor's appointment for check-ups. There are so many new and unexpected questions and concerns. This is normal for all of us right now.

Stay informed: Access reliable resources for up to date and current guidelines. Some of these resources include: CDC, KHDE and the American Academy of Pediatrics. Limit your time watching the news and being on social media, as these can cause an increase in anxiety and expose you to misinformation that may cause unnecessary worry.

Redirecting: It is normal for the uncertainty of COVID-19 to cause anxious, repetitive and intrusive thoughts, so know you are not alone in this. Some coping mechanisms include "checking in" with where you are right now. Close your eyes, breathe and just "check in." Ask yourself "Am I following the important practices of hand washing and social distancing that have been recommended? Ask "Am I okay?" The answer to these questions will likely be yes, and if so, please know you are doing all you can. It helps to remind ourselves that we are not alone, we are all in this together.

Mindfulness: Find activities that keep the mind busy and in the present moment. Exercising is a great way to help anxiety. This might include walking outside in the sunshine, a workout app or YouTube video workout. Other things that can help you feel grounded and present in the moment include activities that require simultaneous attention and action, like cooking, puzzles and games.

Resources: Please talk to your healthcare provider about your concerns. If your anxiety is starting to interfere with your ability to function, affect your eating habits or sleep routine, or causes a level of concern that feels uncomfortable and unmanageable, you should reach out to your physician or mental health professional. AdventHealth Shawnee Mission has a Postpartum Emotional Support program that can further help with resources and provide the support and guidance you need. For more information regarding this program you can call Tricia Rausch at 913-632-4223.