



Motherhood and COVID-19



Information for mothers about new routines during the pandemic

Here you will find general information, based on recent data from national and international health organizations, but **KEEP IN MIND** that information can change as new data and more research findings are published!

It is always **VERY IMPORTANT** to ask a professional of your or your baby's health service for the best care for you! Knowing your history, they are able to offer the most suitable guidance for your and the baby's health condition.

1

Social isolation and absence of your family

The baby's arrival comes with a whole new world, starting with your baby itself! So, it is natural to feel insecure about the new routine and how to balance all the housework, work and even care for children, if you have others kids.

In these hours you would, in most cases, have people to help you, which is now difficult due to social isolation. Adapting to this new routine isn't easy and can make you feel overwhelmed, physically and emotionally. So, to deal with your baby plus the coronavirus intense hygiene and protection coupled with social isolation all alone can result in stress for you, even cause feelings of sadness, loneliness or even anxiety. Don't worry! That moment will pass and there are some things that can be done to relieve those feelings.

2

How can I cope with all of this?

We all have different ways to cope with stressful situations, but some strategies and tips can be suggested for moms with newborn babies to face the challenges of a routine during the pandemic:

- **First of all, remember: THE ISOLATION IS SOCIAL AND NOT EMOTIONAL!**
- **For those moments of loneliness:** Making video calls with your family and friends can help diminish that feeling, besides being a great opportunity to ask for advice about the baby. This will help you keep in touch with the people you love while you get new tips about how to take care of the baby;
- **For those moments of feeling overwhelmed:** How about chilling out and relaxing listening to your favorite music or doing breathing exercises and meditation? By doing that, we produce hormones linked to emotion and well-being which help you to control anxiety and stress. While your baby is sleeping or being cared for by someone else, you can just sit and breathe slowly for a few minutes, paying attention to your breathing patterns. During that moment, you can also choose a relaxing song to listen to;
- If you live with other people, it may be a good time to organize a division of home tasks. Thus, everyone will collaborate and also enjoy a time of rest;
- **For moments of insecurity:** Remember that other women are living through something similar to you. Sharing your experience, good and not so good, with other mothers in social media groups can help you to realize that you are not alone and increase your self-confidence!
- Try not to question your capacity! Motherhood is based on acquired learning that happens over time and through living together. Gradually, you will be able to identify your baby's signs and organize a routine for yourself with her/him. Through staying calm and paying attention to her/him you will learn what to do!
- Finally, **LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF IS EVERYTHING!** Try to take a time to take care of yourself. Sometimes it is difficult to sleep or have good nutrition because of the routine of a newborn. Abandoning these basic necessities could lead to illness or even a breakdown. **Self-care is essential!**

3

Care and concerns with the baby

Social isolation diminishes the opportunities to explore different environments and to get to know new places or people that you have in the first months of your child's life. However, what the baby really needs is the physical interaction and emotional availability of their primary caregivers.

You may be wondering: how can I create new spaces and time at my home for the baby's activities, if I'm already so overwhelmed?

The answer is: It is not too difficult, because every simple day-to-day care activity is an opportunity to introduce a baby activity. So, you don't need to create new schedules or change your routine so much. Here are some tips to help you:

- During the bath, feeding or changing diapers, you can play with your baby: Tickling and watching his smiles are stimulation opportunities and it will make him feel good! The smile is an important form of communication;
- Telling stories, talking to him "eye to eye" and singing to your baby are tips to stimulate his development. In addition, bathing, feeding or changing diapers can be more fun;
- Making video calls with your family and friends with a baby's participation will help him to interact with the family, who can monitor his growth and changes during this period, even from afar!



4

Care about breastfeeding

If you are breastfeeding, it is important to know about the main recommendations of the Ministry of Health for the prevention of COVID-19:

- Always wash your hands before touching the baby or when you are going to extract your milk, if that applies;
- If you have symptoms of COVID-19 or this disease confirmed, it is recommended to wear a mask and also avoid talking, coughing and sneezing on the baby during breastfeeding. If you cough or sneeze, even with a mask, replace it with a clean one;
- If you choose to extract your milk, you should wash your hands with soap and water before and after the procedure. In addition, if you use the extraction pump, it is recommended to clean it before and after each milk extraction.

Breastfeeding is a moment of intimacy, to establish bonds and affection, and to care for your baby gently! If you are having difficulty with breastfeeding, do not hesitate to ask for help. There are websites about this topic, such as amamentacao.com.

5

General care about prevention

- Staying informed is important, but if you observe that the excess of news about COVID-19 is making you feel anguish, try to search for news that minimizes this. Try to give preference to reliable sources, such as the WHO;
- It is important to maintain hygiene practices, frequently washing your hands with soap and water or 70% gel alcohol and cleaning your baby's hands with soap and water;
- Complying with social distancing and avoiding crowds are essential to protect from COVID-19 contamination. Keep in mind: during the pandemic, visits to your baby put you and your baby at risk. Use your creativity to keep in touch with your family and friends! Video calls can be a good solution for this moment;
- Leave your home only when it is really necessary! If you need to go outside, be sure that you wear a mask, but only for yourself because masks are not efficient for the baby;
- Talk to the pediatrician about the baby's vaccination and appointments. He/she will be able to guide you about what should be important to maintain during the pandemic;
- As a basic protection it is recommended to avoid contact with people who have fever, cough or any other cold symptoms;
- If you are in doubt, contact your doctor and the baby's healthcare professional service to answer your questions. He/she knows about your health and will be able to guide you better;
- It is important that you observe all changes in your mood over the time, especially negative feelings, such as sadness and anguish. If necessary, a professional specialist assistant is highly recommended;
- If you observe mood changes, you should contact the Psychology Service of your maternity hospital or look for psychologists who offer online therapy. In case of urgency and intense emotional suffering, you can also look for the **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - phone number: 1-800-273-8255**



BEING A MOTHER IS A CONSTANT LEARNING PROCESS!
Cope with this pandemic period as another step in this long process!

If in doubt, call:
Medical emergency:
911

For more information, follow us on Instagram:  @lepids.ufrj <https://linktr.ee/ftpsicovida>

By:



MATERNIDADE ESCOLA
Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro