

Care of pregnant and postnatal mothers in the context of COVID-19 pandemic

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Introduction

- COVID 19 is a highly infectious viral disease, declared pandemic.
- Pregnant and postnatal women are at risk like the general population.
- High quality care - RMC for all women
- Women have a right to safe and positive birth experience whether COVID 19 positive or negative.
- Women's choices and rights to sexual and reproductive health care, should be respected regardless of COVID-19 status.

Challenges

- Access to MNH and RH services has been affected due to curfew, guidelines indicating minimization of hospital visits and poor networks or linkages to health facilities/ providers.
- Adolescent pregnancy
- GBV on the rise
- Reproductive rights access affected
- No companions in labour ward
- Maternal mental health
- Social stigma
- Increased perinatal and maternal mortality, STIs/ HIV

Recommendation

- Lift barriers to SRH services
- Create more awareness to the communities

Pregnancy

- Limited data is available on pregnancy.
- No clear evidence of vertical transmission so far though some studies indicated potential, however no effects on the fetus (Schwartz, 2020), (Zeng et al. 2020), (Chen et al., 2020).
- Changes in ANC attendance. Women to consult with their providers.
- Use of telemedicine is encouraged.
- There should be coordination of care across all points of care

Care of pregnant women

- Reduce wait times for ANC services and/or client flow
- Encourage women to wait outside or in designated areas and maintain social distancing wherever possible.
- Discourage groups of more than 20 women from attending ANC at any one time
- All women should be triaged and screened for symptoms of COVID-19 before entering the health facility
- Women with COVID-19 symptoms and are experiencing any pregnancy related complications need to be seen separately in an isolated room

Guide to pregnant women

- Social distancing
- Hand washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds frequently
- Respiratory hygiene
- Avoiding people who are sick or suspected Covid-19 cases
- Drinking plenty of fluid and maintain hydration
- Eating healthy food
- Having adequate rest
- Postponing any social events e.g baby shower
- Avoiding non-essential use of public transport
- Avoiding touching eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands

(UNFPA, 2020)

Infection prevention measures

- Hand washing
 - Use of masks
 - Social distancing
 - Respiratory hygiene
 - Telemedicine
- (MoH guidelines, 2020)

Delivery

- Skilled birth attendance should be encouraged.
- Vaginal birth is preferred (assisted vacuum delivery)
- Infection prevention measures

Immediate newborn care

- Skin to skin contact
- Keep warm
- Breastfeed

Breastfeeding

- COVID 19 positive women can breastfeed without restrictions.
- Hand washing before and after touching the baby.
- Practice respiratory hygiene
- Clean and disinfect surfaces routinely

Health workers caring for COVID 19 patients

- Provide PPEs, sanitation and safe working environment
- Testing
- Health care workers to reach pregnant women and new mothers through home visits
- Training, protecting and equipping health workers with clean birth kits to attend home births where health facilities are closed

References

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