Information on the Management of Near Term or Full Term Newborns for Women Presenting with Fever in Labor and Concerns for COVID

Why does a member of the neonatal (NICU) team need to speak with me?
When an expectant mother is being tested for possible COVID, a member of the NICU team usually comes to talk to you about your baby's care. Based on global experience to date, it is thought that infants born to mothers who are COVID positive generally do well.

To decrease the risk of COVID being spread to other patients and medical team members, you and your baby will be admitted to a private room and the staff taking care of you will wear gowns, gloves, face mask and eye protection until they know the result of your COVID test. If your COVID test is positive, the staff will continue wearing this protection until you and your baby are discharged from the hospital.

Your partner can stay with you until the result of your COVID test has been received. If your COVID test is positive, your partner will be asked to leave the hospital as per our Visiting Policy during the COVID pandemic.

If your COVID test comes back negative prior to your baby being delivered, you and your baby will receive regular newborn care. There will be no need for you to wear a mask or take any special precautions.

If your COVID test result is not back before you deliver or comes back positive before or after the delivery, your baby will need some additional testing and monitoring as described in detail below.

What will happen at delivery if I am COVID positive?
As usual, the decision about how your baby is delivered will be made by you and your obstetrician. If your baby is expected to be well at birth, then the usual birthing team will be present at the delivery. The NICU team will organize special tests for your baby including:
- A swab of your baby's nose to test for COVID.
- A sample of the umbilical cord blood and the placenta to test for COVID.

Can I touch my baby?
Yes, you can touch your baby. We always ask that parents wash their hands before and after caring for their baby. If you would like to provide your baby skin to skin care immediately after the delivery, you must wear a face mask. Even when a mother is known to be COVID positive, babies can stay with their mother on the Mother-Baby Unit. We recommend that the baby's bassinette remains about 6 feet (2 meters) from the parent's bed. Parents should wear a face mask for all baby care, including feeding because there is still a low risk for the baby to be infected with COVID.

Can I breastfeed my baby?
We encourage and support parents to breastfeed all babies, even if the mother is COVID positive. Breastfeeding should be started as soon as possible after birth. Mothers must wash their hands first and wear a mask while breastfeeding. If you are not planning to breastfeed or for some reason would prefer not to, other options include extracting your breastmilk with a breast pump and feeding your baby by bottle or feeding your baby formula by bottle. It is really important to practice good hand hygiene when preparing your baby's feeds whatever type.

Who will assess my baby on the Mother-Baby Unit?
As per our usual newborn baby care, your nurse will assess your baby regularly to ensure he/she is feeding well, voiding, stooling and breathing comfortably. A pediatrician will examine your infant sometime in the first 24 hours after the delivery. The normal newborn screening protocols will be followed. During this COVID pandemic, all newborn hearing screens will be done in the community after discharge from hospital.

When can my baby go home?
If both the nurse and pediatrician feel your baby is well, your baby can be discharged home with you. All newborns need to be assessed by a community provider within 48-72 hours after discharge from the hospital:

- If your COVID test comes back negative prior to discharge, your baby will have this routine care in the community.
- If the COVID test for you or your baby comes back positive prior to discharge, we will recommend for your baby to be seen in our Post-Natal Ambulatory Clinic (PNAC). Specific directions will be given to you prior to discharge.

Do I have to worry about my baby when I go home?
Most infants exposed to COVID do well at home and only need to see their community provider for routine appointments. Before going home, your baby's nurse and physician will advise you when it is important for your baby to be seen by a physician. If you are COVID positive, you should continue to wear a mask whenever you are providing care to your baby or feeding your baby at home until the Public Health team tells you this is no longer needed.

Who do I speak with if I have additional questions?
You can ask your obstetrical team to contact a member of the NICU team.