

PARENTS

How did having a child during the pandemic affect you and your baby during the birth and after?

Care partner not allowed during pre- or post-natal appointments or birth
 Being alone at appointments made it hard to make decisions/remember information
 Being isolated despite testing negative for COVID

Lack of pre-natal education for mothers

Lack of post-natal support

Poorly coordinated hospital care during and after birthing
 Not guaranteed private room
 Being isolated despite testing negative for COVID

Fear of getting the vaccine or COVID

Unable to get a virtual or in-person appointment for post-natal mother or baby health issues
 Delays in getting care

Virtual appointments too short and insufficient
 Virtual visits suitable/easier for minor issues
 Concern about less accurate home testing

In-person appointments stressful due to COVID protocols

Hesitant to reach out to doctors for help

Having to search for information online

More stressful for those having first child

Those with midwife felt little impact for birth or post-natal support

Babies more susceptible to getting sick

Babies are shy and scared due to little social interaction

What strategies are needed to improve care and support for birthing parents and babies

Changes are needed urgently

Allow both parents, or mother and a support person to attend appointments and birth

Better access to primary care appointments
 Holistic care to address various needs (e.g. mental health)

Medical appointments should be in-person rather than virtual

Offer choice of in-person or virtual for other appointments (e.g. pre-natal education)

Need more midwives to provide support and guidance

Provide subsidized or insured services (e.g. pre-natal education, doula)

Better post-natal support
 Credible information material
 Follow-up monitoring by healthcare provider

Address isolation through peer support from other mothers

Accommodate more kids in day care through creative solutions

HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS

How did the pandemic affect birthing parents and babies

Limited access to baby for non-breast feeding partner

Reduced breast feeding and increased bottle feeding

Stress and anxiety due to long wait times/virtual visits

Maternal mental health due to lack of support (especially first time mothers)

Difficulty accessing healthcare and support services (lack of programs, financial barriers, immigrants)

Entire families hit by COVID due to lack of paid sick days

Parents have heightened anxiety about child's safety

Babies/children have separation and social anxiety
 Long term impact unknown
 Won't be diagnosed until they attend school (may be too late to intervene)
 Social development
 Speech development (masking, lack socialization, lack doctors to diagnose)
 Cognitive and physical development (parents may not realize)

How did the pandemic affect your ability to provide care and support for birthing parents and babies

Upsetting to witness distress of parents (separated from babies, lacking technology for virtual care)

Difficult to do standardized assessments virtually

Lack of access to care and support

- Post-natal home visits

- Primary care or therapy (e.g. speech, occupational, behaviour)

Catching up on routine care (e.g. immunizations)

Challenging to provide care

- Help parents navigate changed healthcare system

- Make up for shortfalls in staffing/services

- Consulted with colleagues for advice

- Did more frequent virtual visits

Masks and PPE made it difficult to connect with babies and parents

- Modified PPE helped

Unable to build trust with or educate parents restricted from staff-child visits

- Met with parents outside or virtually

What strategies are needed to improve care and support for birthing parents and babies

Consider birthing parent and baby as a single entity to allow a support person to be present

Improve virtual care system (multilingual)

- Triage to specialists

- Triage those who need to be seen in-person

- Provide technology to those without

Train more homecare and community workers

More funding and alternative funding models for healthcare professionals

Make services more accessible

- Better advertise what is available

- Offer at a range of locations and convenient times

- Provide interpreters

- Coordinated centralized system

Follow-up monitoring by healthcare provider

Establish parent support groups

Catch up on backlog of visits to assess child development

Use clear masks to help with speech development

More funding and alternative funding models for healthcare professionals

Socio-economic policies to help vulnerable cope (racialized, low-income, marginalized)

- Subsidized child care