



COVID-19: What Birthways is Doing, What You Can Do, and How to Make the Most of Home- based Supports in the Face of this Pandemic

Updated as of 4.13.20

If you're pregnant or are home with your newborn, we recognize that the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak can feel overwhelming and stressful as you prepare for and then settle in with your baby.

We want to ease the worry and help make this transition as special and sweet as it can be, in whatever ways we can.

Birthways has been around since 1997—we've seen all kinds of things impact expectant and new parents. We'd like to share our experience and offer suggestions to help you prepare. We want you to transform 'panic' into 'empowered!'

In the midst of all that is new, we also have experience in implementing transmission-specific precaution protocols. Here's what we are doing:

Birthways is implementing transmission specific precaution protocols

- We're implementing a rigorous 'exclude from duty' checklist to help ensure your doula will only arrive for a scheduled shift if they are free from any exclusionary conditions.
- We're implementing an 'exclude from duty' buffer zone for anyone who has traveled to areas of higher concentration than the Chicago area.
- As per our standard illness policy, to prevent the spread from one household to another, we have restriction policies with regard to households where families are symptomatic. Additionally, restrictions will also apply if you or your family have had close contact with Persons Under Investigation (PUIs). Contact us immediately regarding any symptoms or illness.
- Our staff are undergoing a COVID-19 online training and our founder is one of the leaders in establishing best-practice guidelines for Board Certified Lactation Consultants around the country.
- Sanitizing surfaces is an important part of preventing droplet spread pathogens. During prenatal or postpartum care our staff will implement a high-touch surface cleaning protocol. Be sure to talk to us about supplies and your preferences.



- Best practice for handwashing is already standard in our care. However, we've added additional time intervals, and other 'threshold' practices.
- We are following CDC and WHO guidelines for the use of facemasks when physical distancing cannot be maintained. Your doula will talk with you about what this means when in your home.
- Your doula is able to do an audit and make recommendations for home safety. We will also offer this as a virtual service.
- Avoid additional appointments when it's appropriate. We'll help you to plan with your Pediatrician the best way to stay safe and be proactive about caring for your baby in the first days and weeks.
- All Birthways office classes and clinics have been paused.
- Birthways is staying up to date with hospital and birth center policies so our doulas can best support you at your chosen birth location.

Your COVID-19 precaution plan

Stay well, stay home

Clinics have always been a place where sick people and well new parents come for care. Of course, you want to access your health care team. But having support minimizes your risk of complications, which reduces your risk for urgent care visits or clinic appointments for both parent and baby. [Read](#) about how your labor support doula can play an important role if healthcare systems become even more taxed.

Please plan ahead

Family support is likely to be impacted as travel restrictions are put into place. Having one or two doulas to support you can minimize points of contact and also helps to protect grandparents who, according to the Center for Disease Control and the World Health Organization, are more at risk.

Surface Sanitizing

Birthways has expanded its surface cleaning protocol to ensure that your high-touch areas are cleaned at each of our visits. We'll cover trouble spots so you don't have to think about it. Please talk with us about your preferred cleaning products, and having a large supply of either disposable or reusable, single use towels (see below).

Laundry and Single-Use Towels — Stock up

We suggest using single-use toweling in bathrooms, kitchens and baby areas for drying hands. Having a large quantity of small hand towels is a good idea if you'd like to avoid



using disposables. We're happy to manage the extra laundry and can set up a system for good hygiene at home.

Baby Blankets and Laundry

Baby blankets can be a great barrier between your baby and clothing that has been worn outside the home. We encourage you to have more blankets on hand and will help you set up a system for washing. Of course, we'll do the laundry for you.

Errands

Running errands are already part of our doula scope of care and we'll implement our precaution protocols as we arrive at your home. You can avoid the frequent outings that are inevitable when you run out of the items you need for baby, for yourself and for your home. Birthways offers antenatal services, so if you would like support during pregnancy, please be in touch!

When we arrive at your home after being out in the world, we have our transition protocol to keep the world outside.

Lactation support

Optimizing lactation (through nursing, pumping, feeding expressed breastmilk) is one of the most impactful ways to support your newborn's health. Doula support, paired with access to our Board Certified Lactation Consultants via virtual visits and Warmline phone support, can play a significant role in lactation outcomes. More than 90% of our clients tell us that their doula was an important factor in establishing breast/chest feeding.