

PAHO asks countries to ensure prenatal checks due to increased risk of severe COVID-19 in pregnant women

Washington, D.C., August 21, 2020 (PAHO)—The Pan American Health Organization is asking countries in the Americas to step up efforts to ensure access to prenatal care services for pregnant women due to recent studies that show an increased risk of severe forms of COVID-19.

In a new Epidemiological Alert, PAHO notes, “Recently published results and studies based on COVID-19 surveillance data have indicated an increased risk among pregnant women of presenting with severe forms of COVID-19 and, therefore, of being hospitalized and admitted to intensive care units.”

Data compiled by PAHO showed that 28,387 cases of COVID-19 in pregnant women have been reported by 10 countries, with 356 deaths reported from January to August 11. Data continues to change and has been collected on different dates depending on the availability of official information from countries.

PAHO’s epidemiological alert said, “The current available data suggest that pregnant women are at a higher risk of developing a severe form of COVID-19; in some cases, this may lead to death.” PAHO therefore recommends that countries address specific risks and vulnerabilities faced by this population, ensure the continuity of prenatal care services, as well as provide timely attention to severe signs and symptoms among pregnant women with COVID-19.

The Organization also recommends that health services “maintain communication with pregnant women in order to provide resources on whom to consult in case of an emergency and to coordinate virtual, face-to-face, or home check-ups if necessary.”

It suggested that countries “intensify efforts to ensure access to prenatal care services, as well as to implement preventive measures to reduce morbidity and mortality associated with COVID-19 across all levels of the health system, in order to maintain the commitment to reducing maternal and perinatal mortality and the progress achieved to date.”

PAHO’s alert said priority should be given to diagnostic tests for pregnant women, because they are at risk for developing severe forms of the disease and “will require hospitalization at some point during their pregnancy.”

“All pregnant and postpartum women must be clinically managed in accordance with the guidelines and regulations established and in effect in each respective country and territory in the Region of the Americas. Additional specific care measures will be required for pregnant woman for whom SARS-CoV-2 infection is suspected or confirmed,” PAHO said, listing a series of guidelines for critical care and algorithms for managing patients with suspected infection at primary care levels and in remote areas.”

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The [Pan American Health Organization \(PAHO\)](#) works with the countries of the Americas to improve the health and quality of life of its population. Founded in 1902, it is the world’s oldest international public health agency. It serves as the Regional Office of WHO for the Americas and is the specialized health agency of the Inter-American system.

LINKS: PAHO Epidemiological Alert: COVID-19 During Pregnancy <https://www.paho.org/en/documents/epidemiological-alert-covid-19-during-pregnancy-13-august-2020>

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