



Wee Beginners (0-18 months): Is it Safe for Grandparents to Meet New Babies?

With the Province easing restrictions and many families bubbling up with grandparents, some are still cautious about how to do so safely, especially with a newborn. Is it safe for Grandma and Grandpa to hold their newest grandkid now? For grandparents especially, there isn't an occasion more painful to miss out on than holding and bonding with their newborn grandchild, but how can they see their grandchild safely during a pandemic?

Here are some questions and answers...

Is quarantining for two weeks before you meet or hold a new baby a good idea?

It is certainly not a bad idea, as this is one way to minimize the risk of COVID-19 transmission between all parties. However, rather than relying on this solution, the family should ensure they are doing everything possible in the weeks and days leading up to the delivery to minimize their exposure to COVID-19: adequate physical distancing, proper hand hygiene, and wearing a mask in indoor settings.

What about testing for COVID-19 beforehand?

A COVID-19 test result is just a point in time. If done too early in the course of infection, this can lead to a false negative result and false reassurance. A negative COVID-19 result does not replace minimizing exposures in the weeks or days leading up to the meeting, or to stop using masks when coming together.

What if the relative or grandparent who wants to visit is now going back to work?

If the relative or grandparent can maintain proper physical distancing at work, wears a mask, is careful about handwashing, and is mindful about not touching their face, then the exposure might be quite minimal.

What can you do to minimize risk? Wear masks during visits?

Nothing is without some element of risk, but as long as everyone is making an informed decision based on the current evidence that minimizes the most amount of risk, then you as a family can make the decision on how the visit can look (i.e. having grandparents see the baby only outside, having them wear masks, etc.)

What about travelling to go meet a new baby? Is it better to drive or fly?

People often think that it is safer to drive instead of fly, however, the answer is not as simple as that. The evidence on this continues to evolve, but COVID-19 transmission on planes might be lower risk than what many people believe. The other thing to think about is how long the drive is. If the drive is four hours long, and requires very few stops, it makes sense to drive and is likely safer than flying during COVID-19. However, if the journey is longer and requires at least two days of driving, you need to quantify the number of stops along the way that would involve potential exposures. If family members are driving to meet the newborn, I would recommend trying to physically distance at all the stops, wearing a mask, and meticulous hand washing when leaving each location.

If your older child is going back to daycare, camp, or school, should this impact your risk calculation?

The answer to this question depends on your local, community transmission rates at the time: where there is a lower prevalence, there is lower risk. There are also infection control measures in place at all daycares and camps to make it as safe as possible. It is also imperative that we start teaching children respiratory etiquette and how to wash their hands properly.

The same infection control measures that we were practising with newborns prior to COVID-19 still apply (like proper hand hygiene and not visiting the baby if you are at all sick). If we can stick to our basic principles on how to visit newborns safely, our little ones will be healthier, well after COVID-19.

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