Mother-Infant Co-location or Separation with COVID-19: Talking Points for Counseling Families

These talking points are designed to help obstetric and pediatric providers counsel COVID-affected families about options for infant care. With more recent data showing minimal morbidity in the pediatric population, talking points and recommendations have evolved over time from recommending separation to now rooming in for mom and baby.

The guidance below refers only to families with anticipated healthy term or late preterm infants who would typically room in with their mothers. Infants anticipated to need NICU care will be admitted to NICU; COVID+ mothers will not be able to visit the NICU.

Talking points:

• Novel coronavirus is a new infection and we continue to learn more about how it may affect newborn infants.
• Infants can be infected before birth, but it is rare. We worry more about mothers who have COVID passing on the infection to their Infants soon after birth through respiratory droplets.
• We initially recommended separation of mom and newborn infant to prevent COVID spread to the baby. Based on research from the past few months, we have learned that most newborns of COVID positive moms do not get ill nor test positive for the virus. The WHO and WA state DOH and AAP now recommend rooming in of mother and infant while CDC recommend separation.
• Based on recent data, UW is now (as of July 31, 2020) recommending that moms and baby room in together. We ask that mothers take extra precautions to prevent spread to her infant.
• If mother and infant stay together, the extra precautions include:
  o Mother wears a mask
  o Mother washes hands frequently
  o Infant stays in a crib, ideally 6 feet away from mother
• If a mother has COVID-19 and is too ill to take care of her infant after birth, the infant will go to the progressive care nursery until mom and baby can be re-united. In this case, mom cannot go to the unit to see the baby.
• It is important to note that the only way to ensure the baby will not be infected is to separate mom and baby completely. Mothers may choose this option, and the infant will be placed in the progressive care nursery. At UW, we do not feel the current science supports separation and feel that bonding and breastfeeding in early days are important for future infant development.
• Mothers must understand that if they choose to be separated from their baby they must identify a healthy family member or support person (no contact with the mother in last 14 days, or negative COVID-19 test within 72 hours of visitation) who can receive discharge training and care for the infant after discharge. If such an individual cannot be identified separation is strongly discouraged.

Summary of current UW recommendations: All COVID+ mothers who are able to care for their infant: Recommend rooming in together with baby.