



CNV-19 (CORONAVIRUS) UPDATE

19 March 2020

Dear Valued Repromed Patient,

We recognise that the current environment in regards to COVID-19 (Coronavirus) is very stressful to all, especially patients in active treatment.

To help alleviate some stress, we want to take this opportunity to inform you of what we believe to be the best medical advice at this time in relation to fertility treatment and the Coronavirus in Australia. Of course this advice may differ from that issued in other countries that are further into the pandemic.

Please be assured that we are regularly reviewing the latest information available to us so we can **continue to provide you with the highest quality fertility treatment**, while ensuring we actively put in practical steps as a business to minimise the risk. **Due to the rapidly evolving situation our advice following may need to change in the near future.**

1. Is it safe to conceive using assisted reproduction?

The Fertility Society recommends *"There is little information on the impact of COVID-19 on pregnancy. The number of pregnant women who have contracted COVID-19 and have subsequently delivered is small and the reassuring results so far, including no evidence of mother-to-baby transmission during pregnancy, must be interpreted with caution."*

The Fertility Society of Australia's full statement can be found here: <https://www.fertilitysociety.com.au/home/fsa-statement-covid-19/>.

2. Is it safe to be pregnant during a Coronavirus pandemic?

Here we believe the Royal Australian New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists statement on this topic is the best authoritative resource. The full statement can be found at <https://rancog.edu.au/statements-guidelines/covid-19-statement>. An outline of their statement is contained below in italics.

Detailed information regarding the impact of COVID-19 infection on pregnant women and their babies is limited by the recency of the disease emergence. Therefore, our pregnancy advice is based on learnings from influenza infection, and also the medical response to the SARS epidemic in 2003.

By way of comparison, influenza is a potentially serious disease for pregnant women, the fetus and newborn babies. A number of changes occur to a woman's body during pregnancy. These changes include reduced lung function, increased cardiac output, increased oxygen consumption, and changes to the immune system. Due to these changes, pregnant women have an increased risk of severe complications from influenza.

However, at this time, pregnant women do not appear to be more severely unwell if they develop COVID-19 infection than the general population. It is expected the large majority of pregnant women will experience only mild or moderate cold/flu like symptoms.

For women who are trying to conceive, or who are in early pregnancy, there is no evidence to suggest an increased risk of miscarriage with COVID-19. Furthermore, there is also no evidence that the virus can pass to your developing baby while you are pregnant (this is called vertical transmission). There is also no evidence that the virus will cause abnormalities in your baby.

*Some babies born to women with symptoms of coronavirus in China have been born prematurely. It is unclear whether coronavirus was the causative factor, or the doctors made the decision for the baby to be born early because the woman was unwell. **Newborn babies and infants do not appear to be at increased risk of complications from the infection.***



3. Is it safe for me to be taking immune suppressing medications (prednisolone and the like) in the context of a Coronavirus pandemic?

Many of our patients are on low dose prednisolone therapy if they have evidence of an overactive immune system that cause implantation failure/ miscarriage, or as part of their adenomyosis treatment. While these treatments have been used extensively over many years with low risk, this risk does change during the time of a viral pandemic. **There is some evidence that immune suppressing drugs like prednisolone may make it more difficult for you to fight off the Coronavirus** if you were to become infected. **Therefore, if you are on prednisolone we would ask that you contact Repromed and we may modify your dose**, or decide to cease it all together, depending on your personal medical history and risk profile.

4. What drugs are safe to take if I get a fever due to Coronavirus?

Paracetamol (Panadol) is entirely safe in pregnancy and does not harm the body's ability to fight the Coronavirus. As such it is the first line treatment if you were to develop a fever in the next few months, irrespective of whether you have had a formal medical diagnosis of Coronavirus. Of course, it is also important to maintain adequate hydration (fluids) during times of fever.

Please do not use ibuprofen (Neurofen) or related NSAIDs to manage fever as there have been some medical reports out of Europe suggesting these types of drugs may limit your ability to fight the Coronavirus.

5. Can Coronavirus effect my egg or sperm quality?

It has been long recognised that **a high fever, common with severe Coronavirus infections, can negatively impact on sperm quality.** As such it is important that men who get a fever take paracetamol to minimise any increase in their body temperature. Furthermore, we would suggest you consider delaying your treatment cycle by at least a month to allow sperm quality to improve. If previous semen analysis have shown low sperm quality, it may be prudent to do a repeat semen analysis outside of IVF treatment to ensure that your sperm quality has recovered sufficiently before booking on for IVF or IUI.

At the present moment there is no evidence that the Coronavirus adversely effects egg quality. However, if you were to develop symptomatic infection during a treatment cycle we would cancel your treatment.

6. Is the use of overseas donor sperm and eggs still considered safe?

For eggs and sperm frozen before the global pandemic there is obviously no risk. Repromed's external providers of donor sperm (CCB) and eggs (ManorIVF) are currently reviewing their policies in light of the recent Coronavirus pandemic. At present they have reassured us that they are screening donors for symptomatic infection and will not be storing gametes (eggs and sperm) from donors with likely or known Coronavirus infection. Locally, Repromed has suspended our clinic recruited sperm donor program. In the short term egg donors will not be allowed to book on until we have clarity on the possible need for a shutdown.

7. I am afraid to attend a consultation appointment. Can I make this a phone consultation instead?

This may be possible for many appointments. However, for some appointments (e.g. donor counselling) telephone counselling is not ideal and it is best we delay these type of consultations.

Please be assured that Repromed's medical staff are continually reviewing the medical evidence relating to Coronavirus and will keep you up to date with any new developments.

Stay safe and best wishes for your treatment.

Kind regards,

Professor Kelton Tremellen
Medical Director