



FSA Advisory to ART Units | COVID – 19

The current COVID-19 situation is unprecedented in recent times. This advisory has been prepared by the FSA and RTAC as a supplement to each unit's emergency plan (Critical Criterion 3) and management of infection risk (Critical Criterion 5).

COVID-19 was declared a serious communicable disease on 29th January 2020 and the WHO declared COVID-19 a pandemic on the 11 of March.

For up to date information on the status of COVID-19 in Australia please refer to the Federal Health website: <https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert#current-status>.

For up to date information on the status of COVID-19 in New Zealand please refer to the following website: <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus>

At this time, all accredited ART units operating within Australia and New Zealand must develop plans to manage the expected risks arising from COVID-19. These include but are not limited to patients becoming infected during a treatment cycle, the testing of donors, and the loss of critical staff due to either a direct infection or the need to self-quarantine due to contact with those that have become infected.

Units are also expected to provide patients with relevant patient information outlining that unit's response to the COVID-19 threat (Good Practice Criterion 4).

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 babies is small and the reassuring results must be interpreted with caution. Evidence on pregnancy outcomes following exposure to different strains of coronavirus, like SARS, suggest that adverse outcomes during pregnancy can occur, such as preterm birth and IUGR.

For a more extensive update on the risks to pregnant women, visit the RCOG link: <https://www.rcog.org.uk/coronavirus-pregnancy>

or this AMJOG review: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/32105680>

A treatment algorithm for pregnant women with potential exposure to COVID-19 can be found here: [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/laninf/article/PIIS1473-3099\(20\)30157-2/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/laninf/article/PIIS1473-3099(20)30157-2/fulltext)



The Fertility Society of Australia therefore recommends that individuals who are seeking to become pregnant naturally or by way of Assisted Reproductive Technology should avoid all non-essential travel to known areas of infection and avoid contact with individuals who may have become infected or have travelled to or from an area that is known to be of high risk. This advice applies to people of all genders.

In Australia and New Zealand, the people most at risk of getting COVID-19 are those who have recently been in a high-risk country or region or have been in close contact with someone who has a confirmed case of COVID-19. However, this may change when community transmission within Australia itself becomes more common. The Australian and New Zealand Government instituted travel restrictions to several countries considered high risk. This information is available on the above websites.

At this point, there is no evidence to recommend contraception or cessation of attempts to conceive, either unassisted or assisted.

Patients of fertility clinics undergoing active treatment, including sperm donors, oocyte donors and gestational carriers, with either a high likelihood of having COVID-19 because of symptoms (fever and/or cough, shortness of breath) or exposure (exposure within 2 meters of a confirmed COVID-19 patient and within 14 days of onset of symptoms, or a person with a positive COVID-19 test result) should contact their treating doctor or fertility clinic by phone or email for advice on how this may impact their current fertility treatment. The FSA advises that these patients consider freezing all oocytes or embryos and avoid an embryo transfer until they are shown to be disease-free.

For more information on COVID-19 go to your state, territory or provincial health service website. All states, territories and provinces provide up-to-date information on the level of infection within the community and also provide detailed information on what to do should you suspect that you may be infected with COVID-19.

Resources:

<https://www.health.gov.au/health-topics/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov>

<https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus>

<https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus>

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports/>