
Data suggests unborn child unlikely to be affected if mum gets infected

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Covid-19 is unlikely to affect an unborn child if a pregnant woman contracts the virus.

Associate Professor Tan Hak Koon, who chairs the obstetrics and gynaecology division at KK Women's and Children's Hospital, said a study of nine pregnant British women who were infected in their third trimester caused no foetal or neonatal deaths.

Six of the babies were tested at birth and found not to have the virus, "suggesting no evidence of infection within the uterus, and hence no transmission of infection from mother to the baby", he said. But he warned that there are no scientific research findings yet on the effect of Covid-19 on the foetus if

the mother gets infected in her first or second trimester.

Prof Tan said: "More data is required before definitive conclusions can be made on the risk of miscarriage or congenital malformations with Covid-19 infection in the first and the second trimester."

However, he added that data from the Sars outbreak in 2003 is reassuring, and "suggest no increased risk of foetal loss or congenital malformations associated with infection early in pregnancy".

Being pregnant also does not increase a mother's risk if she were to be infected. He said: "Based on current data, the mothers themselves do not have a worse outcome than that of the non-pregnant infected population."

Associate Professor Su Lin Lin, who heads the division of maternal fetal medicine at the National Uni-

versity Hospital, agreed that there is no evidence of harm to an unborn baby or that a pregnant woman is at any greater risk because of the pregnancy if she were to be infected with the coronavirus.

"There is no evidence to suggest that Covid-19 infection of the mother causes congenital structural abnormalities to the unborn babies," she noted.

Pregnancy does not result in lower immunity in the women, Prof Su said, adding: "It appears that more severe Covid-19 symptoms are common in those who are older, or people of any age with chronic conditions."

So taking normal precautions such as safe distancing, avoiding crowds and good personal hygiene should be enough, she said.

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