

Giving Birth During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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In the middle of the night on May 4, Rachel's water broke in her condo in Brookline, MA. Her husband, Nate, drove them to Brigham and Women's Hospital, where their first child was born in 2017. Cases of COVID-19 were still surging in Massachusetts in May 2020, and Rachel and Nate knew that giving birth during a pandemic would be different than their first experience.

When Rachel arrived at the Brigham's main entrance, she replaced her face mask with a mask issued by the hospital. A nurse wearing personal protective equipment (PPE), including a gown, gloves and a face mask, screened Rachel for symptoms of COVID-19. Meanwhile, Nate waited outside in their vehicle until it was confirmed his wife was in active labor. The precautions were part of the Brigham's safety guidelines to provide the safest possible care during the pandemic.

To prevent an asymptomatic mother from potentially exposing her newborn to COVID-19, all women admitted to Labor and Delivery at the Brigham are tested for coronavirus. When Rachel tested negative, an OB/GYN confirmed that the baby was on the way. At 4:30 a.m., Nate was welcomed into the hospital to join his wife for the delivery.



Rachel and Nate with their newborn at Brigham and Women's Hospital.

Expert Care During Labor and Birth at the Brigham

Every year, more women choose the Brigham for the birth of their baby than any other hospital in Massachusetts. Rachel was proud to return to the hospital that had provided high-quality, compassionate care for the birth of her first child, Leo.

But shortly after she was admitted, Rachel experienced a complication. Her blood pressure spiked to a dangerous level. Within minutes, Tracy R. Zinner, MD, her OB/GYN in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, prescribed nifedipine. This fast-acting blood pressure medication brought Rachel's blood pressure back to normal.

“Dr. Zinner said that the complication wasn't a cause for alarm and assured me that the baby and I would be fine,” says Rachel. “I was so impressed with Dr. Zinner's wealth of clinical knowledge, and I was comforted by her composure and professionalism.”

Rachel was also cared for by her nurse, Kendra Paige, a 20-year veteran at the Brigham. During labor, Kendra calmed Rachel's nerves by chatting about everyday affairs. They discussed the best beaches in the state and the challenges of working at home while caring for children.

“During my delivery, Kendra created an atmosphere that everything was normal,” says Rachel. “If I hadn't just been tested for COVID-19 and we weren't all wearing face masks, I might've forgotten that I was giving birth during a global pandemic.”

After 3 hours of pushing, Rachel's son Joey emerged into the world. The healthy infant spent some time in the Brigham's nursery where his bed was spaced apart from the others and the nurses who cared for him wore gowns, masks and gloves.

A Two-Night “Vacation” at the Brigham

Rachel says that the 2 nights she and Nate spent in the hospital felt like a vacation. It was a welcomed change compared to the few months they had spent cooped up in their condo, working full-time, and trying to make their 3-year-old's life “happy and exciting.”

Due to the safety measures, Rachel couldn't leave her room as she had done during her first postpartum stay at the Brigham. While in the hospital, Brigham nurses cared for Rachel and Nate and brought everything they needed to their room, including water, juice, snacks and meals. Rachel especially liked Brigham's homemade chocolate chip cookies.

In addition to adhering to the guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, the Brigham was also performing rigorous, around-the-clock cleaning, enforcing social distancing, encouraging everyone to practice good hand hygiene, and requiring all patients and staff to wear face masks.

Continuing Postpartum Care Via Virtual Visits

Having returned from maternity leave, Rachel works remotely from home. She gets most of her postpartum screenings through [virtual visits](#) with Dr. Zinner. She and Nate take daily walks with their children and they have already visited some of the beaches Kendra recommended.

“I'm just grateful to live near Boston where I'm so close to such exceptional medical care,” says Rachel. “Living next to the Brigham means that I'm 8 minutes from the best care in the world, especially for obstetrics.”

In July, Rachel and her family visited their favorite playground. Leo played in a splash pad and Rachel and Nate cuddled Joey as they chatted through their face masks with other parents. “It almost felt normal,” says Rachel. “I hope by next summer, it will be.”



Rachel and Nate with Leo and Joey on a walk.

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