

Pandemic pregnancy a challenge for some women

Catherine Whitnall

There are plenty of things for a pregnant woman to worry about at the best of times, never mind during a global pandemic.

Even though Kendra Rochford knows what to expect when it comes to having a baby — she already has a one, six and eight-year-old at home — it's what she doesn't know that concerns her most.

Ever since the first case of COVID-19 was announced, Rochford has been taking precautions. As a diabetic, her partner Michael is at risk, as is her grandmother, who has COPD.

"I can't risk getting something myself or bringing it home. So everywhere I go, I have gloves, masks and hand sanitizer," said Rochford who is due July 1. "I'm also social distancing and I try not to go anywhere unless I absolutely have to."

Rochford notes staying home isn't too hard. Her children keep her busy — especially since schools are closed until at least May 4 — but she misses being able to keep physically active.

"At least it's not my first. I can't imagine having to go through that now," said Rochford.

Katie Carter can; she's due April 16.

"It's been really stressful," said Carter. "I'm terrified to even leave home in case I pick something up. It's hard to get baby stuff together. I can't take anything from anywhere ... It's taken away a lot of access to things. It's very frustrating."

To add to the challenges, Carter was ordered to take early leave from her pharmacy job due to a health concern.

So while many have only had to deal with finding ways to keep busy at home for three weeks, Carter has been doing it for twice as long.

"In a way, though, it's good to be off work because you don't know what people could bring into the store," said Carter who appreciates the essential employees who continue to work.

But Carter misses being able to attend prenatal support groups and programs, such as the ones offered by EarlyON.

"It kind of changes everything. My week went from being totally full to having nothing to do except my doctor's appointments."

Fortunately, there are places expectant parents can go virtually for support and

answers.

“In the current COVID-19 situation, the health unit realizes it can be challenging and concerning time for new and expectant parents. Many support programs and services have been cancelled or temporarily suspended,” stated Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit communications officer Chandra Tremblay. “However, families can continue to turn to the Health Unit for assistance. Expectant or new parents can speak to HKPR Healthy Families staff by calling [1-866-888-4577](tel:1-866-888-4577), ext. 5003.”

The Health Unit also provides [a Facebook page](#) that people can follow/interact with for information.

As well, adds Tremblay, UNICEF has [online information](#) on COVID-19 that are specific to families and parents, including what to do if you’re pregnant or breastfeeding.

Kawartha Lakes Pregnancy Centre also continues to offer supports to women and families during this difficult time. While the centre is closed to all in-person contact, staff are still available by phone, text or email, Monday to Thursday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Friday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Executive director Melanie Styles added the centre is also providing material assistance in the form of care packages (diapers, wipes and formula — while supplies last) that can be picked up outside the centre on Wednesdays at scheduled times.

Appointments can be booked by calling or texting [705-878-8527](tel:705-878-8527) or visiting www.klpcentre.ca.

Both Rochford and Carter are especially concerned about ‘the big day’.

“I’m very worried about labour and delivery,” said Rochford who has had her partner, grandmother and mother-in-law assist her in the past. “I’ve never had to do it alone. What happens if this drags on? ... It’s just a scary situation right now because there are so many unknowns.”

Hospitals including the Ross Memorial and Peterborough Regional Health Centre — where Carter is already pre-admitted — are only allowing one delivery partner. Hospitals are also requesting these individuals refrain from coming and going to reduce the risk of outside exposure. It’s even a good idea to pack food and snacks for a day or two as a precaution.