

COVID-19 Update for Pediatric Providers Caring for Infants in the Newborn Nursery (Updated 3/19/2020)

Clinicians are taking COVID-19 into consideration in evaluation and management of patients, including newborns. In light of this, the Tennessee Department of Health (TDH) is providing guidance relating to the timing of discharge of infants from the newborn nursery. TDH does not recommend early (< 24 hours after birth) discharges. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Committee on Fetus and Newborn¹ recommends that certain criteria and conditions be met prior to discharge. These recommendations include that the infant's vital signs have remained within normal limits and stable for at least 12 hours; the infant has urinated and passed at least one stool spontaneously; the infant has completed at least two successful feedings; hearing, newborn screening and pulse oximetry for critical congenital heart disease (CCHD) have been completed; the family has received education and demonstrated competency in the infant's care; a plan for continuity of care has been established; the adequacy of a support system at home has been assessed; and barriers to care have been assessed and addressed. Early discharge (< 24 hours after birth) may prevent these criteria and conditions from being addressed and may place the infant and family at risk for poor outcomes. Furthermore, early discharges affect newborn screening samples, necessitating repeat specimen collection after discharge and critical delays in important diagnoses. At the present time, the potential risks associated with early discharges are significant and outweigh any potential benefits.

Please note: This guidance does not include care of Obstetric patients with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 and their newborn infants. For these situations, providers should consult with local hospitals about procedures that are in place or being developed to address these cases.

This is a rapidly evolving situation and this guidance may change. The websites below can be referenced for up-to-date recommendations:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/pediatric-hcp.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/inpatient-obstetric-healthcare-guidance.html>

<https://www.tn.gov/health/cedep/ncov.html>

¹ Benitz, WE, Committee on Fetus and Newborn, American Academy of Pediatrics. Hospital stay for healthy term newborn infants. Pediatrics 2015; 135:948.