



Why MASKS for MOMS?

Emergencies such as natural disasters, pandemic diseases, and person-made disasters disrupt daily life for everyone, but pregnant persons and infants are particularly affected due to unique health concerns that may not be adequately addressed in disasters and public health crises. Unfortunately, disaster preparedness plans often do not fully consider or prioritize women's reproductive and perinatal health needs including access to essential services such as contraception and abortion services, or the health and well-being of pregnant and postpartum persons and their infants/children ([Callaghan et al., 2007](#)).

Women often experience increased stress levels, physical exertion, and caretaking responsibilities during disasters ([CDC, n.d](#)). The effects of these burdens are especially salient for those who are pregnant and even more so for those who are also low-income and/or who face class and/or race discrimination. Pregnancy during a disaster is often associated with adverse birth outcomes including pregnancy loss, preterm birth, intrauterine growth restriction, and decreased birth weight ([Callaghan et al., 2007](#); [Zotti et al., 2015](#)). With respect to COVID-2019, as data continue to be gathered to determine whether affected pregnant persons are at increased risk of adverse health outcomes and if individuals with COVID-19 can pass the virus through the placenta to the fetus via vertical transmission ([Weigel, 2020](#)), it is essential that pregnant persons protect themselves in the same ways as non-pregnant persons: avoiding people who are sick, maintaining social distance from those one encounters outside the household, wearing masks in public spaces, and washing hands frequently using soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

Recognizing the potential harm to pregnant persons and those giving birth in Chicago and throughout Illinois from the COVID-19 pandemic, the [Masks for MOMS](#) campaign was developed by a group of Chicago and Illinois maternal and child health organizations to ensure that pregnant persons and those in labor and delivery have access to face masks at their prenatal visits, when they arrive at hospitals for delivery, and when they are discharged postpartum. Even though masks don't provide absolute protection from COVID-19, the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) recommends all individuals wear masks to help slow the spread of illness and cities and states across the US are now requiring individuals wear masks in public places. The *Masks for MOMS* campaign also recognizes that individuals attending prenatal care in person and those about to give birth will also benefit from the reduced stress that is likely to

come from wearing a mask in their interactions with prenatal care providers. In addition, when all pregnant persons, their families, and support persons have access to masks, the health care team is protected from exposure to people with COVID-19 infection but no obvious symptoms ([Sutton et al. 2020](#)). Masks are also important for postpartum people and their families, because when an infant and parent leave the hospital for home, protection against infection is still a priority for the new family.

How the MASKS for MOMS Campaign Works

The *MASKS for MOMS* campaign recruits volunteer mask maskers and drivers, receives donated handmade cloth face masks at designated sites, and then distributes these masks through partner community health centers, hospitals, and other community sites with a priority of aiding COVID-19 high-positivity communities. Masks are subsequently provided by the partner sites to pregnant persons during in-person prenatal visits, labor and delivery, and postpartum visits. To find out how to launch a *MASKS for MOMS* campaign in your town, city, or state, email: info@BLACKGIRLSBREAKBREAD.ORG. As you launch the campaign in your own geographic location, you will be able to add your locality to the logo as shown below for Illinois. However, prior to this effort, we request that you email us and let us know your intentions.



Organizational Partners

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