

## **Popular Summary**

### **The Risks and Worries of Being Pregnant During a Pandemic**

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Many pregnant people have perceived themselves to be at heightened risk of Covid-19 but their main worries include giving birth during a pandemic, including the uncertainty of whether or not their partner can be present at childbirth.

The Covid-19 pandemic has required people around the world to change their behaviours to stop the spread of the virus. It is important to understand how and why people change their behaviours, to improve the response and communication around risks. Pregnant people have been a particularly interesting group during this pandemic, since there has been uncertainty about in what ways the pandemic affects their health and conditions as pregnant. In this research, the purpose was therefore to understand the experiences of pregnant people during the pandemic, with focus on the risks they perceived caused by Covid-19 and which behaviours they changed to protect themselves from catching the virus. The Swedish Public Health Agency has stated pregnancy as a risk factor for becoming seriously affected by Covid-19. However, this research found that some pregnant people were unsure about what this actually meant. Many research participants thought there was a large lack of information on how they should behave as pregnant during the pandemic. In addition, as pregnancy classes and other informational events were cancelled, many felt that they did not receive the support they had expected as pregnant. This suggests a need to pay more attention to support and inform pregnant people during unexpected crises such as the Covid-19 pandemic.

The majority of pregnant people in this study were the most worried about how the pandemic could affect their childbirth experience. Many also struggled with the fact that their partners could not join the routine checks. If the partner would be ill or have any Covid-19 symptoms by the time the baby was on its way, they would not be allowed to be present during the birth, which was an upsetting thought for many participants. To remain healthy ahead of childbirth was therefore a main source of motivation for many in regards to how much they complied with the recommendations. The majority of the participants were planning to or had already begun to

completely isolate for the last few weeks before the due date. The exclusion of the partner during the checkups was also a worry for some as they wondered if this might affect the connection between the partner and the baby in the future, which is an important area for further research.

This research has been based on interviews with 15 pregnant women across Sweden, during the early spring of 2021. The Theory of Planned Behaviour was used as a theoretical framework to analyse the risk perception and behaviours among the pregnant participants. The results mentioned here and further elaborated in the thesis have brought insights into the experience of being pregnant in a pandemic and can thus be deemed important for the current pandemic as well as future research.