

Breastfeeding during the COVID-19 Pandemic

MilkWorks realizes that the COVID-19 pandemic creates additional questions and concerns for breastfeeding mothers. Our role is to look at the big picture to make sure that mothers and babies are as healthy as possible, both in the short and long term.

We continue to learn more about COVID-19 and its impact on breastfeeding mothers and babies. The information we share is subject to change. We will continue to edit our information based upon emerging recommendations, which at times may not be consistent with each other. We are doing our best to provide information that honors the value of breastfeeding, while limiting the spread of COVID-19.

If you have symptoms of COVID-19 (fever/chills, cough, shortness of breath, fatigue, body aches, headache, loss of taste or smell, sore throat, runny nose, nausea/vomiting, or diarrhea), please call your doctor's office or your health department's COVID-19 hotline (**Lincoln 402.441.8006; Omaha 402.444.3400; Nebraska 402.552.6645**) and request a COVID-19 test. Please tell them that you are breastfeeding.

Once a mother shows symptoms, or has a positive COVID-19 test, her baby will most likely already have been exposed to the COVID-19 virus. It appears that babies are primarily exposed to COVID-19 via respiratory droplets (talking, breathing, sneezing, coughing). Infants and young children appear to have fewer severe symptoms of COVID-19, however, it is possible for ANYONE to get COVID-19.

Like other viruses, there is a chance that COVID-19 may be present in an infected mother's breastmilk. But human milk is well known to help babies fight infections of all types, stay well hydrated, and improve their life-long health. We do NOT tell mothers to stop breastfeeding with OTHER respiratory viruses. If anything, we encourage mothers to keep breastfeeding as it may help protect their baby. *We do not know if this advice should be different for mothers with COVID-19.*

If you are suspected (you have symptoms but no positive COVID-19 test) or confirmed (you have a positive COVID-19 test), two primary issues arise:

-) *Should you feed your baby directly at your breast or with your pumped milk?*
-) *How much contact is it okay to have with your baby?*

Should you feed your baby directly at your breast or with your pumped milk?

-) **If you choose to feed your baby at your breast**, wear a mask or face covering, wash your hands frequently with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. If you sneeze or cough on your breast area, wash the area with soap and water before latching baby. If possible, do not spend extended time periods holding your baby.
-) **If you chose to pump**, rather than feed baby directly at your breast, make sure to wash your hands, pump parts, and bottle or feeding devices with soap and warm water before and after each use.

MilkWorks



Community
Breastfeeding
Center

5930 S. 58th Street
(in the Trade Center)
Lincoln, NE 68516
(402) 423-6402

10818 Elm Street
Rockbrook Village
Omaha, NE 68144
(402) 502-0617

For additional
information:
www.milkworks.org

How much contact is it okay to have with your baby?

-) **Being separated from each other is difficult for both moms and babies.** Until we know more about the risk to babies, you may want to stay at least six feet from your baby when you are not feeding. If possible, ask someone else to help you take care of baby while you are ill. They may help change diapers, hold baby, wash pump parts, help you pump, or feed your baby a bottle.
-) **If you do not have anyone to help you care for baby,** make sure that you wear a mask, wash your hands, and avoid close contact unless you are caring for or comforting your baby. Follow the suggestions above for feeding at the breast or pumping and feeding a bottle.

Remember: many people have COVID-19 and have no symptoms. Most people who have COVID-19 and develop symptoms recover. At the same time, it is wise to take precautions when you are a new mother. Seek a COVID-19 test if you have symptoms or close exposure to someone who has tested positive, and follow the guidelines listed above to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 to your baby.

Please do not hesitate to call MilkWorks and request a telehealth appointment with Dr. Kathy Leeper, our Breastfeeding Medicine Specialist, if you are confirmed to have COVID-19.

NOTE: *The above information is designed for breastfeeding mothers at home who are suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19. If a mother is diagnosed with COVID-19 right before giving birth, recommendations may be different.*

There are 2 research studies seeking input from breastfeeding mothers who have tested positive for COVID-19:

-) This study is seeking mothers who are NEWLY diagnosed with COVID-19 and is requesting samples of milk:
<https://www.uidaho.edu/-/media/UIDaho-Responsive/Files/cals/departments/FCS/covid-19/recruitment-flyer-4-2020.pdf?la=en&hash=889D937BE92481580452B9CDCE5DC811F16A7CC5>
-) This study is a quick survey (available in multiple languages including Spanish and French) for mothers who have been diagnosed with COVID-19:
https://hms.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_eXNOLFMwOWOR2u1

For additional information:

-) <https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/breastfeeding-guidance-post-hospital-discharge/>
-) <https://www.bfmed.org/abm-statement-coronavirus>
-) <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/pregnancy-breastfeeding.html>

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