

# 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.** We believe that babies are primarily exposed to COVID-19 via respiratory droplets (talking, breathing, sneezing, coughing). It appears rare for infants and young children to have severe symptoms of COVID-19.

**Per the latest CDC guidance (8/3/20):** *Current evidence suggests the risk of a newborn acquiring COVID-19 from its mother is low. Further, data suggests that there is no increased risk of infection for the newborn whether they are cared for in a separate room or remain in their mother's room after birth. All caregivers should practice infection prevention and control measures (i.e., wear a mask and wash hands often) while caring for a newborn.*

**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?*

**We do not think that direct breastfeeding increases the risk to your baby** if you wear a mask or face covering and wash your hands frequently with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

**If there is someone else available who you know does not have the virus and can help care for your baby,** it may be best for you to stay at least six feet from your baby when you are not directly breastfeeding or providing care.

**If you do not have anyone who you know does not have the virus to help you care for your baby,** make sure that you wash your hands, wear a mask, and avoid close contact as much as possible when you are not caring for or comforting your baby.

MilkWorks



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For additional  
information:  
[www.milkworks.org](http://www.milkworks.org)

**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.

**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.

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**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.

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

- The University of Rochester Medical Center is seeking breastfeeding moms - with a baby under four months old - who have recently been diagnosed with COVID-19, ideally within the previous seven days.  
<https://www.urmc.rochester.edu/research/health-research/clinical-trials/clinical-trials-details.aspx?trial=16583>
- 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\\_eXNOLFMwOW0R2u1](https://hms.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_eXNOLFMwOW0R2u1)

### **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/hcp/caring-for-newborns.html?eType=EmailBlastContent&eid=81a53315-88f6-43c4-8208-e6bf9a025ae9>

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