

Frequently Asked Questions: Breastfeeding and Pumping During COVID-19



Is it safe to breastfeed if I have confirmed or suspected COVID-19?

Yes, if you follow a few simple precautions. According to current research, you can breastfeed if you test positive for COVID-19 or suspect you do.^{1,2} Certain precautions should be taken, like washing your hands with soap and water prior to breastfeeding, wearing a mask while nursing, and make sure you clean and disinfect surfaces you have touched.²

Did You Know? Breast milk contains antibodies, prebiotics, and active proteins to help your baby fight disease and illness.^{1,6,7}



Is it safe to give expressed breast milk if I have confirmed or suspected COVID-19?

Yes, if you follow a few simple precautions. To date, research shows that breast milk is not likely to spread COVID-19 to babies and SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19) has not been found in breast milk.^{2,3} If you have confirmed or suspected COVID-19, you should wash your hands before pumping or touching breast pump parts and feeding accessories, wear a mask during pumping, use your own breast pump, and clean and disinfect surfaces you have touched.^{2,3}

Did You Know? Your breast milk contains special fats your baby needs for growth and development, and these fats are even antibacterial.⁶



Is it safer to give formula if I have confirmed or suspected COVID-19?

No, breast milk is still best. Breast milk has incredible health benefits that your baby needs to thrive. The benefits of breast milk are so strong that they outweigh the risks of feeding infant formula.⁴

Did You Know? There is no substitute for breast milk. There are thousands of different “ingredients” in breast milk, such as proteins, fats, lactose, vitamins, iron, minerals, water, and enzymes. Most of these ingredients can't be replicated.⁶



Is it safe to hold my baby in skin-to-skin contact if I have confirmed or suspected COVID-19?

Yes, with a few simple precautions. Based on current research findings, holding your baby skin-to-skin is recommended, even if you have COVID-19.^{1,3}

Did You Know? Holding your baby skin-to-skin can help you initiate your breast milk, improve your baby's sleeping patterns and temperature control, helps your baby thrive, and more!^{1,3,5}



Want to learn more? Be sure to get your information from a trusted resource, such as:

UNICEF: www.unicef.org

CDC: www.cdc.gov

American Academy of Pediatrics: www.healthychildren.org

WHO: www.who.int

If you suspect you have COVID-19 or have tested positive, be sure to discuss your breastfeeding plans with your healthcare provider.

References

¹ (UNICEF) – <https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/breastfeeding-safely-during-COVID-19-pandemic>

² (AAP) - <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/Breastfeeding-During-COVID-19.aspx>

³ (CDC) - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/pregnancy-breastfeeding.html>

⁴ (WHO) - <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/question-and-answers-hub/>

⁵ <https://www.who.int/news-room/commentaries/detail/breastfeeding-and-covid-19>

⁶ Jensen, R.G. Handbook of milk composition (Academic Press, San Diego, 1995)

⁷ Kunz, C., Rudloff, S., Schad, W., & Braun, D. Lactose-derived oligosaccharides in the milk of elephants: Comparison with human milk. Br J Nutr 82, 391-399 (1999)