

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

March 8, 2021

Breastfeeding during the Pandemic Information for Parents

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a respiratory disease caused by the novel coronavirus known as SARS-CoV-2.

What are the symptoms?

The main symptoms are fever, a new or worsening cough, difficulty breathing, and sudden loss of smell without nasal congestion, with or without loss of taste. In other cases, symptoms are less severe: fatigue, sore throat or runny nose, for example. Sometimes there may be no symptoms at all, even if the person is infected.

How is the respiratory infection spread?

The disease is primarily spread from person to person through droplets released into the air when an infected person talks, coughs or sneezes within two metres of another person. This is referred to as “close contact”. Transmission can also occur through direct hand contact with droplets from an infected person and subsequently touching of the mouth, nose or eyes. Transmission through indirect contact (e.g. with contaminated objects) is also possible but, is not the main way the disease spreads. The risk that a mother infected with COVID-19 will transmit the disease to her baby is small, provided certain precautions are taken.

So far, studies have found no indication that babies can be infected by breast milk, including colostrum. In fact, breast milk contains antibodies that help your baby to fight infections.

What to expect during the pandemic

Getting ready to breastfeed

Group prenatal classes (in-person) are suspended during the pandemic. However, you can find plenty of information on breastfeeding in the guide entitled [From Tiny Tot to Toddler](#). The 2021 edition of the guide is available online. There are two key, complementary, sections that parents will find particularly useful: [Preparing to breastfeed](#) and [Feeding your baby](#). There are also videos by Fondation Olo and Global Health Media available to help you prepare to breastfeed, including the following (versions in French):

- [Latch-on and swallowing](#)
- [Breastfeeding positions](#)
- [What to do when it hurts](#)
- [Expressing and Storing Breastmilk](#)

Please do not hesitate to raise any questions you may have about breastfeeding preparation at your pregnancy checkups.

Hygiene precautions

Before breastfeeding your baby, wash your hands for 20 seconds.

Breastfeeding at birth

Skin-to-skin contact and rooming-in are recommended to facilitate breastfeeding. At the hospital or the birthing centre, the healthcare providers will assist you with this. The guide *From Tiny Tot to Toddler* contains key information [ways to make breastfeeding easier](#).

Breastfeeding at home

When you are back home, a CLSC nurse will call you to follow-up on you and offer breastfeeding support if you need it.

If you have more questions or need help after this, you may consult a nurse, physician or midwife by telephone or videoconference. In-person appointments will be scheduled if your situation requires it.

A number of [community breastfeeding support groups](#) (website in French only) also provide telephone support, and private services offered by [lactation consultants](#) are also available.

It is important to follow all current public health instructions after you return home.

Learning more about breastfeeding and overcoming the challenges

For additional information on breastfeeding, please see the [Fact Sheet for Nursing Mothers](#) and the guide *From Tiny Tot to Toddler*, especially the section on [Breastfeeding problems and solutions](#).

COVID-19

Mothers and fathers who test positive for COVID-19 will receive support and guidance from public health professionals. They will be given information on how to self-isolate and on the precautions they must take.

Additional information can be found in the document entitled [Breastfeeding during the Pandemic, When the Mother has COVID-19 – Information for Parents](#).