

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

March 8, 2021

Breastfeeding during the Pandemic - When the Mother has COVID-19 Information for Parents

If you have COVID-19, it is recommended that you continue to breastfeed and take care of your baby. Breastfeeding, along with physical contact and closeness, are important for healthy growth and development.

The following information will help you to breastfeed and take care of your baby safely, for example when you take the baby in your arms, change a diaper or give a bottle.

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. In addition, children are usually not as sick as adults when they catch the virus.

Getting ready to breastfeed when you have COVID-19

Whether at the place where you give birth or at home, you must take the following precautions when breastfeeding, providing skin-to-skin contact or taking care of your baby (within two metres):

- First wash your hands for 20 seconds with soap and lukewarm water.
- Wear a mask.

If you are infected with COVID-19 while at the place where you gave birth, you and your baby can stay together in the same room, as long as your medical condition and that of your baby allow it.

When you are back home, your CLSC will contact you to assess how breastfeeding is going and provide support. In-person appointments will be scheduled if your situation requires it.

If you are at home when you are diagnosed with COVID-19, you must self-isolate in a room as much as you can, to avoid contact with other household members who are not infected. However, this does not apply to your baby, who may remain with you at all times, provided you take the precautions mentioned above. A public health worker will contact you with advice adapted to your specific situation.

If you are too sick to breastfeed or take care of your baby but are able to express your milk, someone else in the home can give it to your baby, taking the same precautions.

Please contact the CLSC if you have questions or need advice.

Expressing milk and cleaning bottles, teats and breast pumps at home

Wash your hands for 20 seconds before you begin to express your milk or handle the breast pump, bottles or teats. Take the usual steps when handling [expressed milk](#) or [commercial preparations for babies](#) and [cleaning bottles, nipples and the breast pumps](#).

After using the breast pump, all the components that can be cleaned must be disassembled and rinsed in warm water, then washed with soap and hot water, rinsed in hot water and dried with a clean cloth or paper towel. The surfaces of the breast pump must then be disinfected.

For general information on breastfeeding and support resources, please see [Breastfeeding during the Pandemic – Information for Parents](#).