

# Breastfeeding in the times of COVID-19



The COVID-19 pandemic has had an **impact** on all parts of daily life across the world, and **breastfeeding is no exception.**<sup>1</sup>



One of the major issues is **whether breastfeeding by women infected by the virus is safe.**<sup>2</sup>

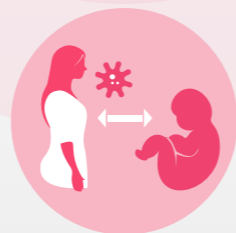
- Early in the pandemic there were fears about the virus **spreading to neonates and infants through breastfeeding.**<sup>1</sup>
- In order to address the uncertainties during this time, many healthcare facilities across the world **instituted strict infection control procedures!**



Supportive breastfeeding group activities **had decreased.**



**Limited visitation and parental presence** in labor and neonatal units.



**Mother-newborn separation** if COVID-19 was suspected or confirmed.

## References

**1.** Al Shahrani AS. Does COVID-19 Policy Affect Initiation and Duration of Exclusive Breastfeeding? A Single-center Retrospective Study. Risk Management and Healthcare Policy. 2022;15:27. **2.** Pérez-Bermejo M, Peris-Ochando B, Murillo-Llorente MT. COVID-19: Relationship and Impact on Breastfeeding - A Systematic Review. Nutrients. 2021 Sep;13(9):2972.

# Can a COVID-19 positive patient breastfeed her newborn?



**Current evidence suggests that breast milk is not likely to spread the virus to newborns and infants.<sup>1</sup>**

## There is low risk of transmission.<sup>2</sup>

- Mothers who get coronavirus just before giving birth and begin breastfeeding, and those who are infected while breastfeeding, **produce antibodies in their milk to protect their baby and enhance the baby's own immune responses.<sup>1</sup>**
- **Continuing to breastfeed** is the best way to fight the virus and protect the baby.



## Breastfeeding provide additional benefits during pandemic:<sup>2</sup>

- **For the baby:** Contributes to the immune system development.
- **For the mom:** Protects against postpartum stress and depression.

**Current recommendations of the WHO, UNICEF, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine (ABM) state that that despite suspected, probable, or confirmed COVID-19:<sup>3</sup>**



Engage in continuous skin-to-skin contact, particularly immediately after birth and during the initiation of breastfeeding.



Mothers & infants should remain together.



**Breastfeeding should be continued.**

**If the mother is severely ill she can provide expressed breastmilk for her baby<sup>3</sup>**

## References

**1.** UNICEF. Breastfeeding during the COVID-19 pandemic. Available on <https://www.unicef.org/eap/breastfeeding-during-covid-19#:~:text=Continue%20to%20breastfeed%20while%20taking,practicing%20good%20hygiene%20during%20feeding>. Accessed on June 14. **2.** Nestle. Breast feeding during pandemic. <https://www.nestlenutrition-institute.org/resources/publication-series/publications/article/details/annales-791-pediatric-issues-time-pandemia-infection-nutritional-strategies/breastfeeding-during-pandemic#tab-2>. **3.** Al Shahrani AS. Does COVID-19 Policy Affect Initiation and Duration of Exclusive Breastfeeding? A Single-center Retrospective Study. Risk Management and Healthcare Policy. 2022;15:27.

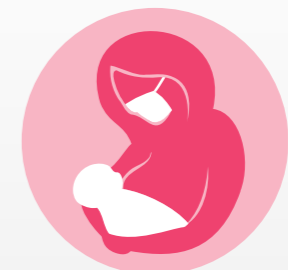
# Breastfeeding during COVID-19 infection should be encouraged:



## These include the 3 Ws:<sup>1</sup>

1

**Wear** a mask during feeding



2

**Wash** hands with soap before and after touching the baby



3

**Wipe** and disinfect surfaces regularly



**All women are encouraged to continue nursing while adopting appropriate hygiene during the feeding<sup>1</sup>**

### References

1. UNICEF. Breastfeeding during the COVID-19 pandemic. Available on <https://www.unicef.org/eap/breastfeeding-during-covid-19#:~:text=Continue%20to%20breastfeed%20while%20taking,practicing%20good%20hygiene%20during%20feeding>. Accessed on June 14.