

## Review on Breast Feeding and Covid 19

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### Abstract

Early exclusive breast feeding and close contact help infants to thrive, promote sensory and cognitive development, protect the infant against infectious and chronic diseases, and lower infant mortality from diarrhea, pneumonia, or other common childhood illnesses (WHO). It is still unclear, whether the vertical transmission of SARS-CoV-2 can occur from mother to child. Breast feeding decisions for women with COVID-19 must counter balance the risk for infection to the infant with the known health benefits. Even in the communities where, COVID-19 is prevalent, mothers can breastfeed because it improves not only the survival and lifelong health and development advantages to newborns and infants but also improves the health of mothers. COVID-19 virus has not been found in breast milk, no samples of amniotic fluid, breast milk, cord blood, or neonatal pharyngeal swabs tested positive. Hence women can start to breast feed when she feels well enough to feed her baby. According to the CDC, it may be wise for the mother with COVID-19 and her infant to be in separate rooms until the mother's transmission-based precautions are discontinued. Mothers should follow infection prevention measures, such as washing hands, cleaning surfaces, sneezing or coughing into a tissue while feeding the infant.

**Keywords:** Breast Feeding; COVID 19; Mother and breast feeding.

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### Introduction

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered corona virus. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to take its toll worldwide, with exponential increases in cases and deaths affecting nearly all countries. Most people who fall sick with COVID-19 will experience mild to moderate symptoms and recover without special treatment. The virus that causes COVID-19 is mainly transmitted through droplets generated when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or exhales. These droplets are too heavy to hang in the air, and quickly

fall on floors or surfaces. Anyone can be infected by breathing in the virus if they are within close proximity of someone who has COVID-19, or by touching a contaminated surface and then with their eyes, nose or mouth.

Government of India is taking all necessary steps to ensure that we all are prepared well to face the challenge and threat posed by the growing pandemic of COVID-19 the Corona Virus. Only with active support of the people of India, we have been able to control the spread of the Virus in our country. The most important factor in preventing the spread of the Virus locally is to empower the Indian citizens with the right information and taking precautions based on the guidelines of professional organization. This health topic helps the readers to understand the facts and concepts on breast feeding and COVID 19.

Several organizations, including the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology, CDC and WHO, offer recommendations regarding breastfeeding and postpartum care for women with COVID-19. With the undersupply of evidence to date, these organizations plan to update their recommendations regularly as new data available.

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Breastfeeding decisions for women with COVID-19 must counterpoise the risk for infection to the infant with the known health benefits of close contact and breastfeeding to the infant and mother. Many have a doubt whether COVID-19 is advanced through breastfeeding, World health organization's states that the COVID-19 virus has not been found in breast milk. And in 6 mothers with COVID-19 who were tested for SARS-CoV-2, no samples of amniotic fluid, breast milk, cord blood, or neonatal pharyngeal swabs tested positive. One mother with SARS-CoV was shown to have anti-SARS-CoV antibodies in postpartum breast milk

Transmission of COVID-19 through breast milk and breastfeeding has not been detected till date. Hence women can start to breastfeed when she feels well enough to feed her baby. Even in the communities where, COVID-19 is prevalent, mothers can breastfeed because it improves not only the survival and lifelong health and development advantages to newborns and infants but also improves the health of mothers. The cesarean mothers who is confirmed or suspected with COVID 19 can also feed her baby following delivery. Placing the newborn close to the mother also enables early initiation of breastfeeding which also reduces mortality. According to CDC, (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention). Breast milk provides protection against many illnesses and is the best source of nutrition for most infants. In limited studies, COVID-19 has not been detected in breast milk; however we do not know for sure whether mothers with COVID-19 can spread the virus via breast milk.

If the mother is sick and choose to direct breastfeed, she should wear a facemask and wash her Hands before each feeding. If she is sick to feed, she can choose to express breast milk.

***World Health Organization (WHO) recommends some steps for breast feeding mother:***

- Wash hands frequently with soap and water
- Use alcohol-based hand rub and especially before touching the baby;
- Wear a medical mask during any contact with the baby, including while feeding;
- Sneeze or cough into a tissue.
- Then dispose of it immediately and wash hands again;
- Routinely clean and disinfect surfaces that mothers have touched.

There is no evidence that breastfeeding changes

the clinical course of COVID-19 in a mother. Women who are too ill from COVID-19 to breastfeed should consider feeding their infant by expressing milk, relactation, or using donor human milk, which may be in short supply because of social distancing and other constraints imposed by the pandemic. Health workers or breastfeeding counselors should support the mothers to relactate. The numerous benefits of breastfeeding substantially outweigh the potential risks of transmission and illness associated with the COVID-19 virus.

***Healthcare Providers Can Support Breastfeeding Mothers:***

- Encourage mothers to get the vaccination (if available and recommended by the hospital) for themselves, their children who are aged 6 months and older, other household members, and others caring for their infants.
- Help mothersto maintain their milk supply while ill and if separated from their newborns in the health care setting.
- Remind mothers and caregivers that breast milk remains the best source of nutrition for the infant, and provides protection through antibodies and other immunological factors.
- Teach mothers and their family members proper hand washing and cough etiquette techniques.
- Educate parents on how they can prevent COVID in themselves and young children.

**Conclusion**

Professional organizations and countries differ in their recommendations regarding mother-infant contact and breast feeding for mothers with COVID-19, but all agree that these decisions must counter balance risk for infection to the infant with the known health benefits of breast feeding to the infant and mother. Decisions regarding mother-infant contact and breast feeding for mothers with COVID-19 should be made by the mother and family in consultation with the healthcare team and should include respiratory and hand hygiene and other infection control precautions.

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