

COVID-19 and Postpartum & Newborn Care

Information and guidelines about COVID-19 are continually being reviewed and updated. The messages below may change as our knowledge of COVID-19 evolves. This information is current as of June 8, 2021.

I. How can I reduce the risk of my baby getting COVID-19?

- COVID-19 vaccination may reduce the possibility of spreading COVID-19.
- The same steps that you were taking to reduce the risk of getting or spreading COVID-19 while you were pregnant (proper hygiene and physical/social distancing, see above) will also reduce the risk of your baby getting COVID-19.
- The [transmission of the COVID-19 virus](#) occurs through person to person spread by larger droplets, like from a cough or sneeze, or touching contaminated objects or surfaces and, then touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Tips for keeping your baby safe during COVID-19 pandemic is found [here](#).

If you have COVID-19 or symptoms of a cold or flu-like illness, you can help protect your baby from getting sick by:

- Always wash your hands before and after touching your baby.
- If possible, wear a medical face mask while breastfeeding your baby.
- Avoid coughing or sneezing on your baby.
- If you have just coughed or sneezed over your exposed breast or chest, gently wash the chest with soap and water for at least 20 seconds prior to breast feeding or skin to skin.
- It is not necessary to wash the chest before every breastfeed or prior to expressing milk.
- If you are expressing breastmilk with a pump, wash your hands before touching the pump, bottle, and other feeding equipment. Clean the feeding equipment thoroughly after each use following steps in [Baby's Best Chance: Parents' Handbook of Pregnancy and Baby Care](#)
- [Clean high-touch surfaces](#) like diaper change pads or station, door knobs, and handles often.

Face Masks:

- **Medical or alternative masks, or face coverings should never be used on infants/children under the age of 2 years. Visors or eye protection are also not needed.**
- If you are using a medical face mask while feeding your baby or providing close care (within 2 meters or 6 feet) to your baby, wash your hands with soap and water before putting on the mask. Do not touch the mask while using it, replace the mask if it gets damp or dirty, and do not reuse single-use masks. If you accidentally touch the mask while you are using it, wash your hands. Keep your baby away from the outside of the mask. Also wash your hands after removing the mask.

COVID-19 and Postpartum & Newborn Care

- Continue to practice good hand hygiene and physical distancing.
- Continue to practice isolation or mandatory isolation as required.

Alternative Face Coverings:

If you do not have a face mask, alternative masks may reduce your droplets from spreading with coughing or sneezing.

- Alternatives are not as effective as face masks.
- Wash your hands before covering your nose and mouth, do not touch the covering, and use it when feeding or caring for your baby.
- Replace the alternative mask if it gets wet and wash it thoroughly after each use.

2. If I have COVID-19, will I still be able to feed and provide care to my baby?

- Based on current evidence, COVID-19 is not transmitted through breastmilk. The benefits of breastfeeding contribute to the overall health of your baby and [breastfeeding](#) proper hygiene continues to be recommended.
- If you have received a COVID-19 vaccination, the vaccine helps your body to produce antibodies that will protect you from getting sick if you are exposed to COVID-19. These protective antibodies pass into your milk and may also protect your child from infection.
- You can find more information on how to safely breastfeed your baby and/or young child during COVID-19 [here](#).
- You can find more information on how to safely feed your baby during COVID-19 if you are using or thinking about using infant formula [here](#)
- If you are not feeling well and are feeding by bottle, consider having someone who is feeling healthy feed your baby.
- It is okay to care for your baby. However, when not providing close care, keep your baby at least 2 metres (6 feet) away from anyone who is sick, who may have COVID-19, or who has cold or flu-like symptoms.

3. If I am too sick to breastfeed my baby or if I'm separated from my baby what can I do?

- It is important to ask for help.
- Express your milk either by hand or use a breast pump.
- Wash your hands before and after expressing your milk and keep all surfaces clean.
- Wear a mask if you are sick.

COVID-19 and Postpartum & Newborn Care

- Avoid coughing or sneezing on milk storage containers and breast pump parts.
- Clean outside of the pump (areas of high touch - buttons, dials) each time you use it.
- Clean all equipment you use to express your breast milk and feed your baby each time you use it.
- Have a healthy adult provide newborn care and feed your baby the expressed breast milk. Breastfeed or express your milk as much as possible.
- Learn more on expressing milk, cleaning and sterilizing feeding equipment and how to safely store and transport human milk in [Baby's Best Chance: Parents' Handbook of Pregnancy and Baby Care](#)

If your baby is in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) and you have COVID-19 or cold or flu-like symptoms, you will not be able to enter the NICU until your respiratory symptoms are gone or 10 days from the start of your symptoms, whichever is longer. You will be encouraged to express your milk by hand or use a breast pump. A healthy family member of your choice who is not isolating can feed your baby. If possible, your nurse will support you to have virtual visits until you are better.

4. If I am experiencing symptoms, have been tested positive for COVID-19, or need to isolate, can I still have skin-to-skin contact with my baby after delivery?

Yes, you can. Your health care provider will show you how to wash your hands and chest and wear a mask to protect your baby. You can continue this practice to keep your baby safe until you are feeling better. Feeling better means that all of your symptoms have gone away or 10 days has passed since the start of symptoms, whichever is longer.

5. What will happen when I am discharged from the hospital?

You and your baby will be discharged as soon as possible from the hospital. A public health nurse, your physician or midwife will be in contact to check on you and discuss further follow up. Your physician or midwife, and your baby's physician will continue your postpartum care, but this might look different depending on where you live.

6. What do I need to watch for when I go home with my baby?

It is important to watch for signs of COVID-19 in both you and your baby once you get home. Symptoms may take up to 14 days to appear after exposure to the virus and exposure can happen in any environment.

These are some of the symptoms you may experience if you are sick:

COVID-19 and Postpartum & Newborn Care

- Fever
- Cough
- Runny Nose
- Sore throat
- Difficulty breathing

Babies sometimes have symptoms that are different than adults. Watch for these symptoms in your baby:

- Fever or low temperature (more than 37.5 or less than 36.5)
- Breathing problems, including fast breathing, coughing, grunting sounds when breathing
- Change in baby's skin color – looks pale, or blue or grey around your baby's mouth
- Fussy and not eating well
- Vomiting
- Not waking up on own for feeding
- Not having a wet diaper or stool everyday
- Watery stool

If you or your baby have any of these symptoms, call 8-1-1 and your doctor or midwife.

If you need to go to the hospital, call ahead to let them know you are coming and that you or your baby have symptoms of COVID-19.

If your baby is blue or not breathing well, get help right away. Call 9-1-1 and let them know if you or someone else in your house is sick.