

## COVID19 RESOURCES AND STATEMENTS RELATED TO BREASTFEEDING

**SafelyFed  
Canada**

*SafelyFed Canada has developed this resource document for Canadians during the COVID-19 outbreak. It contains the source, published or updated or last retrieved date, a link to the original document, and an excerpt of the specific guidance on COVID-19 as it relates to breastfeeding. Please email any suggestions to [info@safelyfed.ca](mailto:info@safelyfed.ca).*

*Last updated Mar 10 2020 18:16EDT*

### **Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC)**

*Case Management in the Home and Co-Living Settings (self-isolation) -- Published/revise  
March 3, 2020*

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/health-professionals/interim-guidance-cases-contacts.html>

“For breastfeeding mothers: considering the benefits of breastfeeding and the insignificant role of breast milk in transmission of other respiratory viruses, breastfeeding can continue. If the breastfeeding mother is a case, she should wear a surgical/procedure mask when near the baby, practice respiratory etiquette, and perform hand hygiene before and after close contact with the baby.”

*En français: Prise en charge par la santé publique des cas de maladie à coronavirus  
(COVID-19) et des contacts qui y sont associés -- Publié/Révisé le 3 mars 2020*

<https://www.canada.ca/fr/sante-publique/services/maladies/2019-nouveau-coronavirus/professionnels-sante/directives-provisaires-cas-contacts.html>

### **British Columbia Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC)**

*Interim Guidance: Public Health Management of cases and contacts associated with novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in the community -- Published/revise February 27, 2020*

[http://www.bccdc.ca/resource-gallery/Documents/Guidelines%20and%20Forms/Guidelines%20and%20Manuals/Epid/CD%20Manual/Chapter%201%20-%20CDC/2019-nCoV-Interim\\_Guidelines.pdf](http://www.bccdc.ca/resource-gallery/Documents/Guidelines%20and%20Forms/Guidelines%20and%20Manuals/Epid/CD%20Manual/Chapter%201%20-%20CDC/2019-nCoV-Interim_Guidelines.pdf)

“For breastfeeding mothers: considering the benefits of breastfeeding and the insignificant role of breast milk in transmission of other respiratory viruses, breastfeeding can continue. If the breastfeeding mother is a case, she should wear a surgical/procedure mask when near the baby, practice respiratory etiquette, and perform hand hygiene before and after close contact with the baby.”

### World Health Organization (WHO)

*Home care for patients with suspected novel coronavirus (COVID-19) infection presenting with mild symptoms, and management of their contacts -- Accessed March 5 2020:*

[https://www.who.int/publications-detail/home-care-for-patients-with-suspected-novel-coronavirus-\(ncov\)-infection-presenting-with-mild-symptoms-and-management-of-contacts](https://www.who.int/publications-detail/home-care-for-patients-with-suspected-novel-coronavirus-(ncov)-infection-presenting-with-mild-symptoms-and-management-of-contacts)

(Also available in Chinese, French and Spanish at the above link.)

“Considering the benefits of breastfeeding and the insignificant role of breast milk in the transmission of other respiratory viruses, a mother could / can continue breastfeeding. The mother should wear a medical mask when she is near her baby and perform hand hygiene before and after having close contact with the baby. She will also need to follow the other hygiene measures described in this document.”

### UNICEF

*Coronavirus disease (COVID-19): What parents should know: How to protect yourself and your children. -- Accessed March 10, 2020*

<https://www.unicef.org/stories/novel-coronavirus-outbreak-what-parents-should-know>

“Is it safe for a mother to breastfeed if she is infected with coronavirus?”

All mothers in affected and at-risk areas who have symptoms of fever, cough or difficulty breathing, should seek medical care early, and follow instructions from a health care provider. Considering the benefits of breastfeeding and the insignificant role of breastmilk in the transmission of other respiratory viruses, the mother can continue breastfeeding, while applying all the necessary precautions. For symptomatic mothers well enough to breastfeed, this includes wearing a mask when near a child (including during feeding), washing hands before and after contact with the child (including feeding), and cleaning/disinfecting contaminated surfaces – as should be done in all cases where anyone with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 interacts with others, including children. If a mother is too ill, she should be encouraged to express milk and give it to the child via a clean cup and/or spoon – all while following the same infection prevention methods.”

**United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)**

*UNFPA statement on novel coronavirus (COVID-19) and pregnancy -- Published/ revised March 5 2020*

<https://www.unfpa.org/press/unfpa-statement-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-and-pregnancy>

“Breastfeeding women should not be separated from their newborns, as there is no evidence to show that respiratory viruses can be transmitted through breast milk, according to UNICEF. The mother can continue breastfeeding, as long as the necessary precautions below are applied:

- Symptomatic mothers well enough to breastfeed should wear a mask when near a child (including during feeding), wash hands before and after contact with the child (including feeding), and clean/disinfect contaminated surfaces.
- If a mother is too ill to breastfeed, she should be encouraged to express milk that can be given to the child via a clean cup and/or spoon – while wearing a mask, washing hands before and after contact with the child, and cleaning/disinfecting contaminated surfaces.”

*UNFPA newsrelease: As COVID-19 continues to spread, pregnant and breastfeeding women advised to take precautions -- Published/ revised March 5 2020*

<https://www.unfpa.org/news/covid-19-continues-spread-pregnant-and-breastfeeding-women-advised-take-precautions#>

“The protection needs of women and girls must be at the centre of response efforts. Part of why we are doing this is to ensure there is a focus on sustaining the accessibility of vulnerable women and girls to quality sexual and reproductive health services as part of the response,” said Dr. Babatunde Ahonsi, UNFPA’s representative in China.”

**Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists**

*National guidance on managing coronavirus infection in pregnancy published -- Published/ revised 9 March 2020*

<https://www.rcog.org.uk/en/news/national-guidance-on-managing-coronavirus-infection-in-pregnancy-published/>

“Pregnant women do not appear to be more susceptible to the consequences of coronavirus than the general population and there is no evidence that the virus can pass to a baby during pregnancy

As a precautionary approach, pregnant women with suspected or confirmed coronavirus when they go into labour are being advised to attend an obstetric unit for birth but their birth plan should be followed as closely as possible

At the moment there is no evidence that the virus can be carried in breastmilk, so it is felt the benefits of breastfeeding outweigh any potential risks of transmission of coronavirus through breastmilk”

*Coronavirus (COVID-19) Infection in Pregnancy; Information for Health Care Professionals; Version 1: Published/Revised Monday 9 March, 2020*

<https://www.rcog.org.uk/globalassets/documents/guidelines/coronavirus-covid-19-virus-infection-in-pregnancy-2020-03-09.pdf>

“It is reassuring that in six Chinese cases tested, breastmilk was negative for COVID-19;2 however, given the small number of cases, this evidence should be interpreted with caution. The main risk for infants of breastfeeding is the close contact with the mother, who is likely to share infective airborne droplets. In the light of the current evidence, we advise that the benefits of breastfeeding outweigh any potential risks of transmission of the virus through breastmilk.

The risks and benefits of breastfeeding, including the risk of holding the baby in close proximity to the mother, should be discussed with her. This guidance may change as knowledge evolves. For women wishing to breastfeed, precautions should be taken to limit viral spread to the baby:

- Hand washing before touching the baby, breast pump or bottles;
- Wearing a face-mask for feeding at the breast;
- Follow recommendations for pump cleaning after each use;
- Consider asking someone who is well to feed expressed milk to the baby.

For women bottle feeding with formula or expressed milk, strict adherence to sterilisation guidelines is recommended. Where mothers are expressing breastmilk in hospital, a dedicated breast pump should be used. “

#### **United States Centers for Disease Control (CDC)**

*Interim Guidance on Breastfeeding for a Mother Confirmed or Under Investigation For COVID-19 -- Published/revised February 19, 2020*

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/pregnancy-guidance-breastfeeding.html>

“Breast milk is the best source of nutrition for most infants. However, much is unknown about COVID-19. Whether and how to start or continue breastfeeding should be determined by the

mother in coordination with her family and healthcare providers. A mother with confirmed COVID-19 or who is a symptomatic PUI should [take all possible precautions](#) to avoid spreading the virus to her infant, including washing her hands before touching the infant and wearing a face mask, if possible, while feeding at the breast. If expressing breast milk with a manual or electric breast pump, the mother should wash her hands before touching any pump or bottle parts and follow [recommendations](#) for proper pump cleaning after each use. If possible, consider having someone who is well feed the expressed breast milk to the infant.”

*Interim Considerations for Infection Prevention and Control of 2019 Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in Inpatient Obstetric Healthcare Settings -- Published/ revised February 18, 2020*  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/inpatient-obstetric-healthcare-guidance.html>

“During temporary separation, mothers who intend to breastfeed should be encouraged to express their breast milk to establish and maintain milk supply. If possible, a dedicated breast pump should be provided. Prior to expressing breast milk, mothers should practice hand hygiene. After each pumping session, all parts that come into contact with breast milk should be thoroughly washed and the entire pump should be appropriately disinfected per the manufacturer’s instructions. This expressed breast milk should be fed to the newborn by a healthy caregiver. If a mother and newborn do room-in and the mother wishes to feed at the breast, she should put on a facemask and practice hand hygiene before each feeding.”

#### **Academy for Breastfeeding Medicine (ABM)**

*Breastfeeding and Respiratory Antivirals: Coronavirus and Influenza - Breastfeeding Medicine -- Published/ revised February 27, 2020*

[https://www.liebertpub.com/doi/10.1089/bfm.2020.29149.poa?utm\\_source=sfmc&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=BFM%20PR%20March%204%202020&d=3/4/2020&mcid=871768054](https://www.liebertpub.com/doi/10.1089/bfm.2020.29149.poa?utm_source=sfmc&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=BFM%20PR%20March%204%202020&d=3/4/2020&mcid=871768054)

“The short answer to questions regarding drug therapy for COVID-19 is that currently there is no antiviral agent proven to be effective against this new infection. However, one investigational drug so far, remdesivir, appears promising to treat COVID-19, and it is in phase 3 clinical trials in patients. Dr. Anderson notes: “Nothing is known about the passage of remdesivir into breastmilk.””

*News Release: Coronavirus Treatment and Risk to Breastfeeding Women -- Mary Ann Leibert Inc. Publishers -- Published/ revised March 4, 2020*

<https://home.liebertpub.com/news/coronavirus-treatment-and-risk-to-breastfeeding-women/3662>

Arthur I. Eidelman, MD, Editor-in-Chief of *Breastfeeding Medicine*, states: “Given the reality that mothers infected with coronavirus have probably already colonized their nursing infant, continued breastfeeding has the potential of transmitting protective maternal antibodies to the infant via the breast milk. Thus, breastfeeding should be continued with the mother carefully practicing handwashing and wearing a mask while nursing, to minimize additional viral exposure to the infant.”

**American Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG)**

*Practice Advisory: Novel Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) -- Accessed March 10, 2020*

<https://www.acog.org/Clinical-Guidance-and-Publications/Practice-Advisories/Practice-Advisory-Novel-Coronavirus2019?IsMobileSet=false>

“The CDC has developed Interim Guidance on Breastfeeding for a Mother Confirmed or Under Investigation for COVID-19. There are rare exceptions when breastfeeding or feeding expressed breast milk is not recommended. Whether and how to start or continue breastfeeding should be determined by the mother in coordination with her family and health care practitioners. Currently, the primary concern is not whether the virus can be transmitted through breastmilk, but rather whether an infected mother can transmit the virus through respiratory droplets during the period of breastfeeding. A mother with confirmed COVID-19 or who is a symptomatic PUI should take all possible precautions to avoid spreading the virus to her infant, including washing her hands before touching the infant and wearing a face mask, if possible, while breastfeeding. If expressing breast milk with a manual or electric breast pump, the mother should wash her hands before touching any pump or bottle parts and follow recommendations for proper pump cleaning after each use. If possible, consider having someone who is well feed the expressed breast milk to the infant.

In limited case series reported to date, no evidence of virus has been found in the breast milk of women infected with COVID-19; however, it is not yet known if COVID-19 can be transmitted through breast milk (ie, infectious virus in the breast milk).”