



PREGNANCY, BREASTFEEDING AND COVID-19 GUIDANCE

BACKGROUND

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) has become a global pandemic that has impacted the world and resulted in a national emergency declaration in the US.

Although the nation is experiencing uncertain times, the National WIC Association (NWA) is here to provide support to the WIC community. NWA is the non-profit education arm and advocacy voice of the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), the 6.9 million mothers and young children served by WIC and the 12,000 service provider Agencies who are the front lines of WIC's public health nutrition services for the nation's nutritionally at-risk mothers and young children.



BREASTFEEDING GUIDANCE FOR COVID-19

With various recommendations circulating from medical, public health, and breastfeeding authorities regarding breastfeeding and COVID-19, it can be difficult navigating which resource is best to use. The National WIC Association recommends following the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) guidelines for breastfeeding and COVID-19.

CDC recommends the following:¹

Pregnancy

- » It's unknown whether or not pregnant people have a greater chance of getting sick from COVID-19 than the general public or if they're more likely to have serious illness as a result. Based on available information, pregnant people seem to have the same risk as adults who are not pregnant.

However, we do know that:

- » Pregnant people have changes in their bodies that may increase their risk of some infections.
- » Pregnant people have a higher risk of severe illness when infected with viruses from the same family as COVID-19 and other viral respiratory infections, such as influenza.

How to protect yourself:

- » It is always important for pregnant people to protect themselves from illnesses.
- » Avoid people who are sick or who have been exposed to the virus.
- » Clean your hands often using soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- » Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily.

Mother-to-Child Transmission

- » Mother-to-child transmission of coronavirus during pregnancy is unlikely, but after birth a newborn is susceptible to person-to-person spread.
- » A very small number of babies have tested positive for the virus shortly after birth. However, it is unknown if these babies got the virus before or after birth.
- » The virus has not been detected in amniotic fluid, breastmilk, or other maternal samples.

Breastfeeding

- » Breastmilk provides protection against many illnesses and is the best source of nutrition for most infants.
- » You, along with your family and healthcare providers, should

decide whether and how to start or continue breastfeeding

- » In limited studies, COVID-19 has not been detected in breastmilk; however we do not know for sure whether mothers with COVID-19 can spread the virus via breastmilk.
- » If you are sick and choose to direct breastfeed:
 - » Wear a facemask and wash your hands before each feeding.
- » If the you are sick and choose to express breastmilk:
 - » Express breastmilk to establish and maintain milk supply.
 - » A dedicated breast pump should be provided.
- » Wash hands before touching any pump or bottle parts and before expressing breastmilk.
- » Follow recommendations for proper pump cleaning after each use, cleaning all parts that come into contact with breastmilk.
- » If possible, consider having someone who is well feed the expressed breastmilk to the infant.

Detailed recommendations can be found on CDC's website.

WIC: EMPOWERING FAMILIES, STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES

Please direct all questions to Darlena Birch, Senior Public Health Nutritionist, at dbirch@nwica.org.

¹Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [2020] Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) and Breastfeeding. Accessed online: <https://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/breastfeeding-special-circumstances/maternal-or-infant-illnesses/covid-19-and-breastfeeding.html>.

