

BACKGROUND

The 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19) is a new virus that causes respiratory illness in people and can spread from person-to-person. This virus was first identified during an investigation into an outbreak in Wuhan, China. Symptoms can appear 2 to 14 days after being exposed to someone with or suspected of having COVID-19. Symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, cough, difficulty breathing, shortness of breath and diarrhea. Breastmilk contains antibodies that fight infection and boost the baby's immune system. Human milk is the safest food in an emergency; it contains the proper vitamins and minerals for healthy growth (CDC, 2020 & USBC, 2020).

IF I HAVE COVID-19, CAN I PASS IT TO MY BABY IF I BREASTFEED?

According to the United States Breastfeeding Committee, if a mother or baby becomes ill, the best thing the mother can do is to continue breastfeeding to provide her baby with human antibodies. There are limited studies on women with COVID-19, but those studies show that the virus has not been detected in breast milk. However, it is unknown if mothers with COVID-19 can transmit the virus through breast milk.

Breast milk provides protection against many illnesses. There are rare exceptions where breastfeeding or feeding expressed breast milk is not recommended. The CDC has no specific guidance at this time for breastfeeding while infected with COVID-19 or similar viruses, however there are some resources on their [website](#) that could be helpful during this time.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I HAVE COVID-19?

If you are confirmed to have COVID-19 or are a symptomatic patient under investigation (PUI), you should take all possible precautions to avoid spreading the virus to your baby:

- Wash your hands before touching or feeding your baby;
- Wash your hands before touching any breast pump or bottle parts and follow recommendations for proper pump cleaning after each use; and
- If possible, consider having someone who is healthy feed your expressed breast milk to your baby.

WHERE CAN I GET HELP WITH BREASTFEEDING?

We understand that breastfeeding resources in your area may be limited due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The following links will help you access statewide and county specific resources:

- [COVID-19 Resources](#)
- [APPs and Websites Postcard](#)
- [Philadelphia Region: Breastfeeding Resource Directory](#)

Additionally, the Pennsylvania Breastfeeding Referral Guide can be found [here](#).

RESOURCES FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information, visit <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/Pages/Coronavirus.aspx>.

The latest information on the coronavirus in the U.S. and worldwide can be found on the [CDC website](#).

Additional information from the CDC on what to do if you are sick can be found [here](#).

Help is available, contact the Crisis Text Line by texting **PA to 741-741**.

