

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Department of Health: Take Proper Steps to Protect Yourself and Baby While Breastfeeding during COVID-19

Harrisburg, PA – As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact the state, the Pennsylvania Department of Health today encouraged people who are breastfeeding or chestfeeding to take proper steps to protect themselves so their babies can get the essential nutrients needed to develop and stay healthy.

“Breastfeeding continues to be an important health goal for babies and young children as the world navigates through the COVID-19 pandemic,” Secretary of Health Dr. Rachel Levine said. “Breastmilk contains antibodies that fight infection and boost the baby’s immune system. If a mother or baby become sick, the best thing the mother can do is continue breastfeeding to provide her baby with human antibodies. Human milk is the safest food in an emergency, as it contains the proper vitamins and minerals for healthy growth in infants.”

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of an infant’s life and continued breastfeeding with complementary foods until the infant is one year old.

“Mother’s milk is usually best for babies, and it offers complete nutrition that cannot be reproduced in formula,” Dr. Levine said. “However, we recognize that breastfeeding or chestfeeding is not medically appropriate or feasible for all families. This is why we recommend that mothers work with their primary care physician to determine which feeding option is best for them and their family.”

Parents confirmed to have COVID-19 should take all possible precautions to avoid spreading the virus to their baby. Breastfeeding mothers who have tested positive for COVID-19 and choose to breastfeed and/or express breast milk should:

- Wear a cloth face covering while feeding and during expression of milk;
- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before each feeding, before touching any pump or bottle parts, and before expressing breast milk;
- Use a dedicated breast pump (not shared);
- Follow recommendations for proper pump cleaning after each use; and
- If possible, expressed breast milk should be fed to the infant by a healthy caregiver who does not have COVID-19, is not at high-risk for severe illness from COVID-19, and is living in the same home.

The ideal setting for care of a healthy, full-term newborn during the birth hospitalization is within the mother’s room. Mothers should discuss a temporary separation from their newborn with their healthcare team if confirmed to have COVID-19. Decisions about temporary separation should be made with respect to the family’s wishes. Through communication and proactive partnerships between mothers, hospital staff and their

communities, breastfeeding remains a top priority of the Department and the families it serves throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Please visit the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) and [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) websites for additional information on breastfeeding with COVID-19.

The Wolf Administration stresses the role Pennsylvanians play in helping to reduce the spread of COVID-19:

- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Cover any coughs or sneezes with your elbow, not your hands.
- Clean surfaces frequently.
- Stay home to avoid spreading COVID-19, especially if you are unwell.
- If you must go out, you are required to wear a mask when in a business or where it is difficult to maintain proper social distancing.

Updated Coronavirus Links: Press Releases, State Lab Photos, Graphics

- [Daily COVID-19 Report](#)
- [Press releases regarding coronavirus](#)
- [Latest information on the coronavirus](#)
- [Photos of the state's lab in Exton](#) (for download and use)
- [Coronavirus and preparedness graphics](#) (located at the bottom of the page)
- [Community preparedness and procedures materials](#)
- [Map with the number of COVID-19 cases](#)

All Pennsylvania residents are encouraged to sign up for AlertPA, a text notification system for health, weather, and other important alerts like COVID-19 updates from commonwealth agencies. Residents can sign up online at www.ready.pa.gov/BelInformed/Signup-For-Alerts.