

## Is breastfeeding safe if I contract Coronavirus?

If you have coronavirus and you are caring for your baby, you will be encouraged to breastfeed as normal.

You may decide to express breast milk so that someone else can feed your baby. This is usually your partner or a close family member. You might do this if you feel too unwell to breastfeed. Your healthcare team may also advise you that this is the safest way to feed your baby.

### While breastfeeding

- [Wash your hands properly](#) before touching your baby or any breastfeeding equipment like pumps or bottles.
- Wear a face mask if you are doing breast or bottle feeds yourself.
- Ask your midwife or other staff to show you how to clean the pump before & after each use.

### What is known about Covid 19 and breastfeeding?

To date no evidence has been found to suggest that the virus is present in the breast milk of mothers with COVID-19. There has been no evidence of virus transmission in breastmilk from previous experience with other coronaviruses such as SARS CoV or MERS CoV and therefore the risk of transmission through breast milk is likely to be low.

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.

If someone who is breastfeeding becomes ill, it is important not to stop breastfeeding. The baby has already been exposed to the virus by the mother and/or family and will benefit most from continuing breastfeeding.

Information on managing symptoms of colds and flu whilst breastfeeding is available at [mychild.ie](http://mychild.ie). It is best to avoid medications that contain decongestants. These can lead to a reduction in milk supply.

This guidance may change as knowledge evolves. Further information in relation to breastfeeding and Covid 19 can be accessed at:

- [Mychild.ie](http://mychild.ie)
  - <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-pregnancy.html>
  - <https://www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/child-health/taking-medication-while-breastfeeding.html>
- HPSC <https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/guidance/pregnancypostpartumguidance/Guidance%20for%20management%20of%20suspected%20COVID19%20in%20pregnant%20and%20post%20partum%20period%20V1.pdf>
- Academy of breastfeeding Medicine <https://www.bfmed.org/abm-statement-coronavirus>
- La Leche International <https://www.llli.org/coronavirus/>