



# COVID-19 and breastfeeding

## Should I have the COVID-19 vaccination if I am breastfeeding?

Yes, COVID-19 vaccination is recommended for women who are breastfeeding.

It is important to know:

- COVID-19 vaccination may protect your baby by transferring antibodies through the placenta (during pregnancy) or through breastmilk (during breastfeeding).
- If you are breastfeeding, it is preferable for you to have a Pfizer or Moderna COVID-19 vaccine. The mRNA COVID-19 vaccines are the preferred vaccines for people aged under 60 years. You do not need to stop breastfeeding after vaccination.

This advice, and the evidence behind it, can be found in the Australian Government's [Shared decision making guide for women who are pregnant, breastfeeding or planning pregnancy](#)

## If you have COVID-19, can you breastfeed?

Yes. If you want to breastfeed, this will be supported. There is no evidence that COVID-19 can be passed on to your baby in breast milk, and the benefits of breastfeeding and the protection it offers outweigh any possible risks.

Breastmilk is best for almost all babies. Breastfeeding helps you and your baby bond together. It also helps protect your baby against infection.

Your decision to breastfeed may involve thinking about your baby's health, how sick you are and whether you are well enough to care for your baby. Your healthcare team will discuss your individual situation and feeding options with you.

## What is advised about breastfeeding with other infections?

In general, breastfeeding helps protect against many illnesses. For example, when a mother has the flu, breastfeeding is still encouraged with extra care to avoid spreading the virus to her baby.

## Can your baby get COVID-19 from breastfeeding?

The COVID-19 virus has not been found in breastmilk. However, COVID-19 is easily passed from person to person through close contact. You should take additional precautions while in close contact with your baby (as you do for other infections).

## What precautions should you take when looking after your baby?

If you have COVID-19, it is important to do everything you can to prevent your baby getting the virus, even if you don't have symptoms.

It is very important that you:

- are fully vaccinated
- wash your hands before and after touching your baby using soap and water for 20 seconds or alcohol-based hand rub

- routinely clean and disinfect surfaces you have touched
- wear a mask while in close contact including while breastfeeding
- where possible use social distancing at home and in hospital
- have a healthy adult assist you to care for your baby where possible.

## Can your baby be fed expressed breast milk?

Feeding your expressed breastmilk (EBM) to your baby is strongly supported. If you decide to feed your baby EBM, you will also need to think about:

- your health and your baby's health
- where your baby is located
- who is looking after your baby

Your healthcare team will discuss with you how they can support you and your feeding choices.

## What precautions should you take with expressed breast milk?

- Wash your hands prior to touching the pump or bottle parts.
- Clean the pump and all its parts, and the bottle carefully after each use.
- If you are unwell, have a healthy caregiver feed the expressed breast milk to your baby where possible
- Remind other caregivers to wash their hands using soap and water for 20 seconds or alcohol-based hand rub before and after touching your baby.

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