

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE CORONA VIRUS AND BREASTFEEDING

### WHAT IS THE CORONA VIRUS?

The novel corona virus is a new strain of corona virus. The disease called COVID-19 (coronavirus disease 2019) is a new virus first seen in Wuhan China. Not much is yet known about how it affects children or pregnant women. We do know it is possible for people of any age to be infected with the virus, but so far there have been relatively few cases of COVID – 19 reported among children. The virus has caused the most problem among older people with pre- existing medical conditions, and has been fatal only in rare cases. We know that the virus is transmitted through direct contact with respiratory droplets of an infected person (from coughing and sneezing) and from touching surfaces where the virus is present. The virus may survive on surfaces for several hours, but simple disinfectants will kill it.

### HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE THE CORONA VIRUS?

If available, testing may be recommended to confirm COVID-19. If testing is unavailable or not recommended, the diagnosis may be made clinically based on a person's exposure to COVID-19 and presenting symptoms including cough, fever and difficulty breathing. These symptoms are like flu or common cold. In more severe cases, the infection can cause pneumonia or breathing problems.

### CAN I BREASTFEED IF I HAVE CORONA VIRUS?

You may be wondering how it may affect your family and breastfeeding. There is still much to learn about how COVID-19 is spread. Person-to- person spread is thought to occur mainly through respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes and by touching surfaces where the virus is present. In limited studies on women with COVID-19 and another coronavirus infection, Severe Acute Respiratory syndrome (SARS-CoV), the virus has not been detected in breastmilk. It is not known whether mothers with COVID-19 can transmit the virus in breastmilk.

Currently, the CDC has no specific guidance for breastfeeding during infection with similar viruses like SARS-CoV. However, it is known that those who become infected shortly before giving birth and those who become infected while

breastfeeding will produce specific antibodies and many other critical immune factors in their milk to protect their nursing infant. The benefit of continuing to breastfeed and providing your milk is important for protecting your baby against illness. There are only rare exceptions when breastfeeding or feeding expressed milk is not recommended.

All mothers in affected and at - risk areas who have symptoms of fever, cough or difficulty breathing should seek medical care right away and follow instructions from their health care provider.

If you feel well enough to breastfeed your baby, it is recommended to wear a mask when you are near your baby (including during feeding), washing hands before and after contact with your baby and cleaning/disinfecting any contaminated surfaces.

If you are too ill to breastfeed or are regularly expressing milk, express your milk into clean containers and give it with a clean bottle, cup and or spoon. Be sure to wash your hands before touching any pump or bottle parts and keep all pump parts and feeding bottles very clean.

## SUPPORT THROUGH CORPORATE LACTATION SERVICES

Please refer to Corporate Lactation Services handout *Information on Colds and Flu* for general information on breastfeeding when you are sick.

We are here to help you develop a customized plan. For breastfeeding concerns, call your lactation consultant at 888-818-5653

My Lactation Consultant is: \_\_\_\_\_ Ext: \_\_\_\_\_

## RESOURCES

<https://www.unicef.org/stories/novel-coronavirus-outbreak-what-parents-should-know>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/pregnancy-guidance-breastfeeding.html>

<https://www.llli.org/coronavirus/>