

# PREGNANCY AND BREASTFEEDING

*Helpful nutrition tips during COVID-19*



## WHAT IF I AM PREGNANT DURING COVID-19?

It is natural for expecting mothers to be concerned about getting COVID-19 and the risk of transferring the virus to the baby. Due to changes in your body and immune system, women who are pregnant can experience negative effects from some respiratory infections. There is no evidence of transmission of COVID-19 from mom to baby while pregnant.

Women who are pregnant should take the same precautions to avoid COVID-19 infection as everyone else. It's very important to follow the recommended safety precautions:

1. Practice physical distancing by keeping 2 metres of space between yourself and others. Avoid crowded spaces.
2. Wash your hands frequently with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub.
3. Practice good respiratory hygiene: Cover your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing and avoid touching your face.
4. Isolate yourself from others who are symptomatic or have tested positive for the coronavirus.

Let your healthcare team know if you are feeling symptoms and maintain your appointments if appropriate.

## SHOULD I CONTINUE TO BREASTFEED?

If you have a suspected case of or test positive for COVID-19, it is recommended that you continue breastfeeding. The spread of COVID-19 through breast milk and breastfeeding has not been detected to date. With good handwashing and respiratory hygiene, breastfeeding can continue. The benefits may outweigh the risks to the baby. Isolation from the baby is not to be considered unless the family chooses to and as advised by the health care team.

Here are some safety precautions to follow to protect your baby if you have COVID-19 or are showing symptoms:

- Wear a mask while breastfeeding
- Wash your hands before breastfeeding
- Cover your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze. Dispose of the tissue and wash your hands
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth
- Routinely clean and disinfect surfaces that have been touched

In the event that mom is too ill to breastfeed, it is recommended to:

- Use expressed breast milk, donor human milk or infant formula.
- Ask someone who is not infected to feed the baby.
- Restart breastfeeding as soon as you can.

Clean and sterilize the breast pump and equipment as directed and avoid sharing this and any bottles if you have more than one baby.

## SHOULD I BE CONCERNED ABOUT SUPPLIES OF INFANT FORMULA?

Two common infant formulas in Canada are Enfamil A+® from Mead Johnson & Co and Similac® from Abbott. Infant formula shortages should not be a concern because manufacturing and supply has not been affected by the pandemic. Extra measures are taking place in the production of their formulas and distribution. Health and safety remain their top priority.

It is recommended as part of an emergency kit to stock up on infant formula for 14 days, as for all other essentials.

## SHOULD I BE CONSIDERING INTRODUCING COMPLEMENTARY FEEDING/WEANING EARLY IF THERE ARE INFANT FORMULA SHORTAGES?

A shortage in Canada for infant formula is not expected. Weaning early should not be considered for this reason alone. A breastfeeding mom should continue breastfeeding or provide iron-fortified formula only prior to 6 months of age. At 6 months of age, solids can be introduced given baby shows signs of curiosity with food, can sit up with little help, and has good head and neck control.

## REFERENCES

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