

## Feeding your baby during coronavirus Including when parent has suspected or confirmed COVID-19

- **CARRY ON BREASTFEEDING**
- **WASH HANDS MORE FREQUENTLY**
- **ASK FOR HELP IF NEEDED**

The following guidance is based on current best knowledge around infant feeding, coronavirus COVID-19 and infant feeding during emergencies. This is being closely monitored and updated regularly. Follow current [NHS 111 online](#) advice for coronavirus.

If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, please see the latest information from Unicef UK Baby Friendly Initiative <https://www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly/> and the RCOG: <https://www.rcog.org.uk/en/guidelines-research-services/guidelines/coronavirus-pregnancy/>

### **Pregnancy, preparing to feed your baby**

Your midwife, health visitor and other healthcare professionals are available to offer support and information. If you are pregnant, you can **learn more about breastfeeding before baby is born**, this will help establish comfortable feeding and milk supply when baby is born. There are good resources including informative videos on Newham Council's website '[Getting ready for your baby](#)' section. Establishing breastfeeding is a learning process for mum and baby. **Ask for help early** if you are concerned. Your midwife and health visitor will give you updated information about baby feeding support in Newham during coronavirus.

### **Skin to Skin after birth**

*RCOG Parents guide*

*"Q. Will I be able to stay with my baby/give skin-to-skin if I have suspected or confirmed coronavirus?"*

*Yes, if that is your choice. **Provided your baby is well and doesn't require care in the neonatal unit, you will stay together after you have given birth.**"*

The main concerns during coronavirus is close contact between you and your baby, as you may share infective airborne droplets, leading to infection of the baby after birth. You will be supported to have skin to skin contact with your baby to stabilise baby, support breastfeeding and bonding.

Caring for a baby involves frequent, close and intimate contact with your little one. Whilst we learn more about this new disease, all guidance is based on changing information. The

benefit of close loving relationships between parents and babies is well understood, for baby's brain development as well as their emotional well-being, and parents too. However, if you have confirmed or suspected coronavirus, you may wish to consider how you can best minimise the risk of transmission to your baby.

### **Breastfeeding**

#### **Carry on breastfeeding.**

At the moment there is no evidence that the virus can be carried in breastmilk, so it's agreed that the well-recognised benefits of breastfeeding outweigh any potential risks of transmission of coronavirus through breastmilk.

Mothers make **antibodies and protective factors** that will be passed on to their babies via their milk. This needs to be part of any discussion with all mothers about their method of feeding for both infected and uninfected mothers. This protection will not exist if babies are formula fed.

Remember it is also possible that mothers with coronavirus symptoms will have an ordinary cold or flu.

Stopping breastfeeding is not recommended as this will deprive baby of immune protective factors, can increase the risk of mastitis for the mother, and can be a difficult process at an already stressful time. Mothers will need more information about mastitis and safe responsive bottle feeding if stopping breastfeeding is their informed choice.

A discussion about the risks and benefits of breastfeeding should take place between the mother, her family and maternity team.

This guidance may change as knowledge evolves.

If you choose to breastfeed your baby, the following precautions are recommended:

- Wash your hands before touching your baby, breast pump or bottles
- Try to avoid coughing or sneezing on your baby
- Consider wearing a face mask while holding your baby close i.e whilst breastfeeding, if available
- Follow NHS guidance for bottle and pump cleaning and sterilisation
- Consider asking someone who is well to feed expressed breast milk to your baby.

### **Mixed Feeding**

If you are mixed feeding (combination of breast and formula) aim to **maximise and protect your breastmilk supply**. Remember that as well as excellent, tailored nutrition, breastmilk produces antibodies, including to viruses. Speak to your health visitor for practical information to support you to increase and protect your milk supply, this will also reduce any need for infant formula. You will find useful information on increasing milk supply in our section online '[Feeding your baby](#)'. You do not need a special or extra diet to make more milk. A healthy balanced diet is fine. More milk is made by increasing breast stimulation.

Feeding baby more often, both breasts is great. Some mums express to increase demand to make more milk. A [quick reference guide](#) for health professionals on supporting mothers to maximise the amount of breastmilk they are able to give or to re-lactate if they have stopped breastfeeding and wish to re-start can be found at [https://www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly/maximising-breastmilk-and-re-lactation-guidance/amp/?\\_twitter\\_impression=true](https://www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly/maximising-breastmilk-and-re-lactation-guidance/amp/?_twitter_impression=true)

### **Bottle feeding**

If you are using infant formula, there is no need to buy extra stock. The UK supermarket supply chain is working efficiently, restocking daily in most cases. Remember that you don't need to buy expensive brands, and can swap brands whenever, there is no evidence this affects baby's health; there are often differences between batches and shelf life changes the nutritional profile. Any brand, including supermarket own brand is just as safe and nutritious for your baby; more information on the types of formula can be found on [our website](#). The recommendation is **\*first stage\*** infant formula until 12 months. The big difference for baby's health is: using a first stage formula, safe preparation, and responsive, paced bottle feeding for baby's emotional well-being and brain development. If you are concerned **Speak to your health visitor**. For more info please see '[Feeding your baby](#)' links below.

### **Online infant feeding support**

To complement the support from your health visitor, the '[Feeding your baby](#)' section of [Newham Council's 0-19 Children's Health website](#), has helpful videos on position and attachment, expressing, increasing milk supply and common problems such as sore nipples, as well as reliable information on responsive, paced bottle feeding, choosing infant formulas, and introduction of solid foods. The Unicef BFI guides to breastfeeding and bottle feeding in other languages (incl Bengali, urdu, mandarin, polish, Romanian) are also here:

<https://families.newham.gov.uk/kb5/newham/directory/advice.page?id=91Bv7qGMZ1g>

Contact Newham Health Visiting: [healthvisiting@newham.gov.uk](mailto:healthvisiting@newham.gov.uk) 020 3373 9983

## **Baby feeding helplines**

**National Breastfeeding Helpline 0300 100 0212 9.30am – 9.30pm**

**Association of Breastfeeding Mothers 0300 330 5433 9.30am – 10.30pm**

**Breastfeeding Network 0300 456 2421 9.30am – 9.30pm**

**La Lech League 0345 120 2918**

**NCT 0300 330 0700 8.00am – 12.00 midnight**

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