

FAQs for mums: Breastfeeding and pumping during COVID-19

Breast milk is the best source of nutrition for babies and protects them against illness.^{1,2} Breast milk of infected mothers contains no active new coronavirus^{3,4} but it contains antibodies against it.^{5,6} The benefits of breastfeeding outweigh the potential risks associated with COVID-19.^{1,2,7,8}

 **Is it safe to breastfeed if I have confirmed or suspected COVID-19?** **YES⁸**

 **Is it safe to give expressed breast milk if I have confirmed or suspected COVID-19?** **YES⁸**

 **Is it safer to give formula if I have confirmed or suspected COVID-19?** **NO⁸**

 **Is it safe to still hold my baby in skin-to-skin contact if I have confirmed or suspected COVID-19?** **YES⁸**

 **Is pasteurised donor breast milk from a milk bank safe to be given to my baby in the NICU?** **YES⁴**

 **Is it safe to give my pumped milk to my unwell or preterm baby in the NICU if I have confirmed or suspected COVID-19?** **YES⁷**

Supporting breastfeeding.⁸

At birth and in the hospital

- Initiate breastfeeding within the first hour after birth
- Practice skin-to-skin contact as soon as possible
- Continue to use recommended cleaning guidelines for pumping equipment.

For infants and young children, continue breastfeeding and introduce safe and healthy complementary foods at 6 months of age⁸

Mothers and babies should not be separated due to confirmed/suspected COVID-19⁹

How to keep you and your baby safe during COVID-19

The 3 Ws:¹

- **WEAR** a mask during feeding
- **WASH** hands with soap before and after touching the baby
- **WIPE** and disinfect surfaces regularly

FAQs for mums: Helpful tips for breastfeeding confidence

When you start breastfeeding you may think you're not producing much milk. Over the first few days it's normal to only make small amounts.¹⁻⁴ Then, from around three days after your baby's birth, your milk volumes start increasing rapidly.^{3,4} This is why babies tend to lose weight at first, but start regaining it once they're drinking more milk. Your baby should be back to their birth weight or above by 14 days of age and continue to gain weight at around 150g–250g per week until the age of three-four months.^{3,4}



How often should a baby be feeding in the first four weeks, what is normal?

It might feel like your baby's always hungry, however newborns can feed 10 to 12 times every 24 hours – it's nature's way of stimulating your breasts to keep producing good volumes of milk.^{7,8} If your baby is growing and producing nappies as expected, the chances are you're doing just fine.



How do I know my baby is getting enough milk?

Looking at your baby's output can reassure you that they are drinking enough milk. This is how many wet and dirty nappies you should be expecting each day:^{5,9}

	Day 1–2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5 – week 6
Wet nappies	1–2 	3+ 	4+ heavy 	5+ heavy 
Dirty nappies	1+ 	2+ 	2+ 	2+ 
Poo appearance	Meconium poos: black and sticky, gradually becoming browner and less sticky.	Greenish-brown to brownish-yellow. No longer sticky.	Yellow. Seedy texture, loose and watery.	Yellow. Seedy texture, loose and watery.

From week six, breastfed babies continue having five or more heavy, wet nappies a day. By this stage some have fewer, but larger, poos in 24 hours. Poos will continue to look the same until you start introducing solids.^{5,9}



How do I increase my milk supply if my baby is not meeting the above expectations?



Checking your baby's latch
An expert can observe a breastfeed and help with attachment if necessary.¹⁰



Increasing feed frequency
Eight or more in 24⁷⁻⁹ – it's normal for some of these feeds to be at night too.



Holding your baby skin-to-skin
As well as calming you both, this boosts the hormone that helps your breast milk flow.¹⁰



Pumping after each feed
This temporary measure can also help to increase your breast milk supply.^{6,10}

REMEMBER: Whilst frequent feeding and unsettled periods are normal, if your baby feeds constantly and never seems satisfied, it's worth having a checkup.



What should I do if I have sore nipples?¹¹⁻¹³

- Seek professional lactation support to check your baby's latch during breastfeeding and for any signs of a tongue-tie
- Express some of your milk onto your nipples after feeds
- After feeds, use ultrapure medical-grade lanolin, like Purelan on your nipples
- Discuss with a lactation specialist whether a contact nipple shield may be helpful for you
- If you are unable to continue breastfeeding, to allow the nipples to heal, ensure that you maintain your milk supply with frequent pumping (minimum eight times in 24 hours) until your baby is back exclusively breastfeeding again



What should I do if I'm too unwell to breastfeed whilst I have COVID-19?

If you are too unwell to breastfeed, ideally you can express your milk and have another family member feed your milk to your baby.^{14,15}

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