

Breastfeeding during the COVID-19 pandemic

Important information
for new mothers and families

We would firstly like to offer our congratulations on the birth of your baby. This is a special time as you get to know the new addition to your family.

In this notice we wish to advise you of the following:

- ▶ Statement from Ministry of Health (Manatu Hauora) regarding the importance of breast milk and breastfeeding during COVID-19 Pandemic
- ▶ The reason for your early discharge from Auckland City Hospital
- ▶ The postnatal care you would be likely to receive
- ▶ What to expect in the first week of your baby's life and where to find online information that will be helpful
- ▶ Who to call if you have concerns regarding your baby's progress

Community setting

Breastfeeding is important to human health at all times, but especially in times of emergency. Breastfeeding gives protection to the child by passing on immunity from mum.

Most often babies who are breastfed stay healthy even when their parents or other family members are unwell with an infectious illness.

Women will have specific antibodies and other important factors in their milk if



1. They become infected with COVID-19 shortly before giving birth and then begin breastfeeding, or
2. They become infected when already breastfeeding.

These antibodies will protect their breastfeeding infant and enhance their infant's immune responses.

If you become unwell and you are breastfeeding your baby, it is important to keep breastfeeding. Your baby will already have been exposed to the virus and will benefit most from continued direct breastfeeding at the breast.

Self-isolation after potential exposure to COVID-19

If you are in self-isolation after potential exposure to COVID-19, your breastfed baby should stay with you so that you can keep breastfeeding.

Wash your hands before and after touching your baby.

- ▶ Wear a surgical mask during breastfeeds.
- ▶ Avoid kissing and touching your baby's face.
- ▶ Avoid coughing or sneezing on baby.
- ▶ Exclusive breastfeeding (only offering baby breast milk) offers the best protection for babies. There is no evidence that the virus is passed on through breast milk.

Confirmed or probable COVID-19





There is no evidence of transmission of the virus in breast milk. It is good for your baby to continue breastfeeding even if you have confirmed or probable COVID-19.

To reduce spread while breastfeeding:

- wash your hands before and after you feed.
- wear a surgical mask during breastfeeds.
- avoid kissing and touching your baby's face.
- avoiding coughing or sneezing on them.
- clean/disinfect contaminated surfaces – as should be done in all cases where anyone with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 interacts with others, including children.

If you are too unwell to breastfeed, express your milk and give it to your baby with a clean spoon, cup or bottle – all while following the same methods of preventing spread.

Your baby will be considered a “close contact” of a confirmed case and you will be given advice about this from your Public Health Unit.

Ministry of Health website: <https://www.health.govt.nz/>

The Reason for Your Early Discharge from Auckland City Hospital

The new discharge policy has been put in place to protect you, your baby and your family/whanau from unnecessary risk of infection while in hospital. It is also essential to reduce the number of visitors to hospital to keep our doctors, midwives, nurses and all frontline staff safe.

The postnatal care you would be likely to receive

During this pandemic, your LMC will arrange for you to be visited the day after you go home and on a regular basis after that. Your LMC is the first person you would contact for up to six weeks after birth, when you are discharged from their care.

More information

Breastfed NZ App



For helpful information about what to expect in the first week of your baby's life and for ongoing information – please download the free BreastFedNZ App – <https://www.breastfednz.co.nz/>

Topics include:

Chapter 2 – The First Few Days: Learning to breastfeed, Your breastmilk is amazing, Babies are born clever, Latching & positioning, Weighing babies, Red flags

Chapter 3 - The Early Weeks: What is a 'let-down', Painful nipples, Cluster feeds & growth spurts, Too little or too much milk, unsettled babies, colic, Baby blue

Global Health Media



Global Health Media offer informative videos on many topics for new mothers.

The whole series is available at Breastfeeding Series Global Health Media Project – <https://globalhealthmedia.org/videos/breastfeeding/>

You may find the following helpful:

Breastfeeding in the first hours

<https://globalhealthmedia.org/portfolio-items/breastfeeding-in-the-first-hours-after-birth>

Attaching your baby at the breast

<https://globalhealthmedia.org/portfolio-items/attaching-your-baby-at-the-breast>

Is your baby getting enough milk

<https://globalhealthmedia.org/portfolio-items/is-your-baby-getting-enough-milk>

Expressing & Storing Breastmilk

<https://globalhealthmedia.org/portfolio-items/expressing-and-storing-breastmilk>

Plunket



For free health advice & information anytime

Phone: **0800 933 922**

<https://www.plunket.org.nz/your-child/illness/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Plunket - Breastfeeding: Commonly asked questions - <https://www.plunket.org.nz/your-child/newborn-to-6-weeks/food-and-nutrition/breastfeeding-commonly-asked-questions/>

La Leche League

<https://lalecheleague.org.nz/information/mothering-and-breastfeeding/>

Mama Aroha breastfeeding information

Mama Aroha Breastfeeding Talk Cards present comprehensive information for all mothers and families on - breastfeeding, the first week, supply & demand, feeding cues, signs of a good latch, and much more. Download your copy on <https://bit.ly/2Xp32mC>