

- Breast feeding / Virus

Why a mom should still breastfeed even when she has COVID

WHO: Transmission of active COVID-19 through breast milk and breast-feeding has not been detected to date

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There are many factors that make for a successful breastfeeding journey. The top reason is probably the determination of the mother to breastfeed.



The second is getting the support she gets. She needs support from everyone, especially her partner and family. This is especially true during the pandemic.

Even when the mother has COVID-19, the World Health Organization (WHO) says she should stay with her baby.

WHO Western Pacific Regional adviser for Maternal, Child Health and Quality Safety Dr. Howard Sobel said that mothers need to practice skinto-skin contact and rooming-in day and night.

No reason

“Transmission of active COVID-19 through breast milk and breastfeeding has not been detected to date. There is no reason to avoid or stop breastfeeding,” he said.

He added that the benefits of breastfeeding still outweigh the use of formula milk. It includes prevention of death among babies and children unCOVID-19 der the age of 5 resulting from diarrhea, pneumonia and neonatal sepsis.

Sobel added that necessary infection prevention should be practiced.

“The mother should be helped to clean her chest with soap and water if she has been coughing,” he said.

However, she does not need to wash her breasts before every feed.

“If the mother does not have a medical mask, she should still be encouraged to continue breastfeeding, as the benefits of breastfeeding outweigh the potential harms of the virus when breastfeeding.”

And the pre-pandemic reminders also stand. Sobel said breast milk substitutes, feeding bottles, teats and pacifiers should not be promoted.

Alternatives as last resort

When severe illness prevents a mother from breastfeeding or caring for the infant, she should be supported to express breast milk, said Sobel.

He added that alternatives to breastfeeding a newborn or a young infant should only be entertained if the mother becomes too sick or unwell.

The WHO recommends that breastfeeding women get vaccinated when it becomes available to them.

“None of the currently approved vaccines use the live virus, so there is no risk of passing the virus to the baby through breast milk,” Sobel said.

He also added that there is evidence that, “after vaccination, antibodies are found in breast milk, which may help protect the baby against COVID-19.”

So stay strong, Mama. Breastfeed your baby.