

- Breast feeding / Immunity

## BENEFITS SEEN IN BREAST MILK ANTIBODIES

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COVID-19 antibodies passed from infected mothers to their breastfeeding newborns provide more benefit to the baby than researchers expected to see, according to a report published on Wednesday in *Jama Network Open*.

The researchers studied 21 babies born to mothers who were infected with the coronavirus at the time of delivery.

Two months later, the researchers found so-called IgG antibodies to the virus made by the mothers' bodies had been passed from breast milk into the babies' blood, resulting in so-called passive immunity.

But a different class of immune molecule in the breast milk, known as IgA antibodies, had stimulated active immunity in the newborns, triggering their immune systems to produce their own IgA antibodies.

Seen in saliva

Compared to formula-fed infants of infected mothers, the breast-fed babies had high levels of self-produced IgA antibodies to the virus in their saliva.

"We have shown for the first time that the mother can also trigger the active immune response of the newborn through the transfer of (immune molecules) in breast milk resulting in the production of salivary antibodies," Dr. Rita Carsetti of Bambino Gesù Children Hospital and Dr. Gianluca Terrin of Sapienza University, both in Rome, said in an email.