

**Media Release March 20 2020**

*for immediate release*

## **ABA releases information about breastfeeding and COVID-19**

The Australian Breastfeeding Association has released important information and resources for families who are at risk of experiencing viral illness, including respiratory viruses such as the coronavirus.

From all that we know, the important message is to continue breastfeeding and, wherever possible, keep mother and baby together. Breastfeeding helps protect babies from a variety of illnesses. This is because breastmilk contains antibodies and other immune protective factors. If a mother has been diagnosed with or is suspected of having COVID-19, care should be taken to avoid spreading the virus to the baby while continuing to breastfeed.

If a mother has stopped breastfeeding, there is help available to restart by calling the Breastfeeding Helpline for support.

'Breastmilk provides infants with a range of anti-infective factors that work together to help protect infants from illness', ABA Senior Manager Breastfeeding Information and Research Naomi Hull said.

'The importance of breastfeeding for the health of mothers and their infants is well established. For example, research shows not breastfeeding increases an infant's risk of a variety of infections including respiratory, gastrointestinal and ear.'

Risks involved with the disruption of direct breastfeeding include:

- A reduction in breastmilk supply. If less milk is removed from a mother's breasts, then she will make less milk.
- Emotional distress for the infant. Breastfeeding is more than just food. Along with nourishment, protection from some illnesses, it also provides a sense of security and warmth.
- Possible breast refusal by the infant when trying to re-commence direct breastfeeding due to the infant developing a preference for the bottle.

If interruption to direct breastfeeding is determined to be medically necessary, expressing is encouraged. The expressed breastmilk can be fed to the infant to reduce the risk of the infant becoming unwell.

The Australian Breastfeeding Association has released resources to support mothers, families and health professionals.

- Breastfeeding information article dedicated to COVID-19:  
<https://www.breastfeeding.asn.au/bfinfo/covid-19>.
- Breastfeeding Helpline available 24 hours with Breastfeeding Counsellors available to answer any questions or issues with breastfeeding and COVID-19.

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- LiveChat, a service to guide people to find evidence-based information about breastfeeding.
- Local groups for members to access, now predominantly meeting online to ensure that mothers are not socially isolated and have a connection to their community.  
<https://www.breastfeeding.asn.au/contacts/groups>
- For Health Professionals, Australian Breastfeeding Association has access to fact sheets they can download: <https://abaprofessional.asn.au/download/covid-19/>.

For more information about avoiding spreading viruses see:

- [The flu and you. Help stop the spread. Australian Government. Department of Health.](#)

For more information about breastfeeding, search the Australian Breastfeeding Association website for articles on:

- [Relactation](#)
- [Infant feeding in emergencies](#)
- [Expressing and storing breastmilk](#)
- [Health outcomes associated with infant feeding](#)
- [Breastfeeding and hospitalisation.](#)

## Resources

The World Health Organisation (WHO), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and UNICEF provide the following useful information about coronavirus including in relation to breastfeeding through the virus.

WHO:

- [Home care for patients with suspected novel coronavirus \(nCoV\) infection presenting with mild symptoms and management of contacts](#)
- [Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\) outbreak](#)
- [Q&A on coronaviruses \(COVID-19\)](#)

CDC:

- [Interim Guidance on Breastfeeding for a Mother Confirmed or Under Investigation For COVID-19](#)
- [About Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions and Answers: Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) and Pregnancy](#)

UNICEF:

- [Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\): What parents should know](#)

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