

Breastfeeding Information

Breastfeeding information topics

COVID-19

What is coronavirus (COVID-19) and what are its symptoms?

COVID-19 is a new strain of coronavirus linked to the same family of viruses as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).¹ Symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, cough and shortness of breath.¹

Can you still breastfeed if you have COVID-19?

If you have been diagnosed with or are suspected of having COVID-19 you can continue to breastfeed or supply expressed breastmilk for your baby.² Breastfeeding helps protect babies from a variety of illnesses and importantly keeps mothers and babies together.³ This is because breastmilk contains antibodies and other immune protective factors. If you have stopped breastfeeding there is help available to restart, please call the Breastfeeding Helpline (<https://www.breastfeeding.asn.au/breastfeeding-helpline>) for support.

What if you are too unwell to breastfeed?

If you are too unwell to breastfeed your baby, another option is to express (<file:///C:/bf-info/breastfeeding-and-work/expressing-and-storing-breastmilk>) regularly so that your baby keeps receiving your breastmilk and so is less likely to become unwell. Before expressing, it is important to wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water. If using a breast pump, it is important to ensure proper cleaning is followed. See our article [Expressing and storing breastmilk](#) (</bf-info/breastfeeding-and-work/expressing-and-storing-breastmilk>) for more information.

Will my supply reduce if I have COVID-19?

Some mothers notice a supply drop when they are unwell. If this happens to you, you can call to speak to an [Australian Breastfeeding Association counsellor](#) (</breastfeeding-helpline>) for support, see a [lactation consultant](#) (<http://www.lcanz.org/>) or a medical advisor. You may also find it helpful to read our article [Increasing supply](#) (</bf-info/common-concerns%E2%80%93mum/supply>).

How can I reduce the risk of spreading the virus to others?

Even if you don't have symptoms of COVID-19, there are things we can all do in order to minimise the chances of spreading COVID-19 to others. For example, it is important to:

- Wash your hands often using soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitiser.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a bent elbow or tissue when coughing or sneezing, and immediately throwing away any used tissues.
- Avoid close contact with anyone who has cold or flu-like symptoms.
- Seeing a doctor if you have a fever, cough or feel like it is hard to breathe.¹

For further information about COVID-19 and breastfeeding, see:

World Health Organization:

- Home care for patients with suspected novel coronavirus (nCoV) infection presenting with mild symptoms and management of contacts (<https://www.who.int/publications-detail/home-care-for-patients-with-mild-symptoms-and-management-of-contacts>) (<https://www.breastfeeding>

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- Q&A on coronaviruses (COVID-19) (<https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses>)

UNICEF:

- INFANT & YOUNG CHILD FEEDING IN THE CONTEXT OF COVID-19 (https://www.ibfan.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/IYCF-Programming-in-the-context-of-COVID-19-Brief-2_v1-30-March-2020_-for-distribution-1.pdf)

Queensland Health:

- COVID-19 and breastfeeding (https://www.health.qld.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0041/949676/c-covid-bf.pdf)

For more information:

If breastfeeding has stopped, there is information and support available on how to restart: Relactation and induced breastfeeding ([/bfinfo/relactation-and-induced-lactation](#))

Information is also available to reduce formula top-ups and increase breastmilk feeds: How to wean off formula supplements ([/bfinfo/how-wean-formula-supplements](#))

For information on breastfeeding and other respiratory illnesses: Breastfeeding and influenza ([/bfinfo/breastfeeding-and-influenza](#))

Please be aware that some of our group get together and other events may be cancelled in the coming weeks, please check with your local group contact to get up to date information.

References

1. Victora, C.G., Bahl, R., Barros, A.J.D. et al. Breastfeeding in the 21st century: epidemiology, mechanisms, and lifelong effect. *Lancet*. 2016;387:475–490.
2. WHO, Department of Communications, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health, and Ageing. Q and A on COVID-19 <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-on-covid-19-pregnancy-childbirth-and-breastfeeding> (<https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-on-covid-19-pregnancy-childbirth-and-breastfeeding>) Accessed March 2020.
3. UNICEF, Coronavirus disease (COVID-19): What parents should know, Available at <https://www.unicef.org/stories/novel-coronavirus-outbreak-what-parents-should-know> (<https://www.unicef.org/stories/novel-coronavirus-outbreak-what-parents-should-know>) Accessed March 2020

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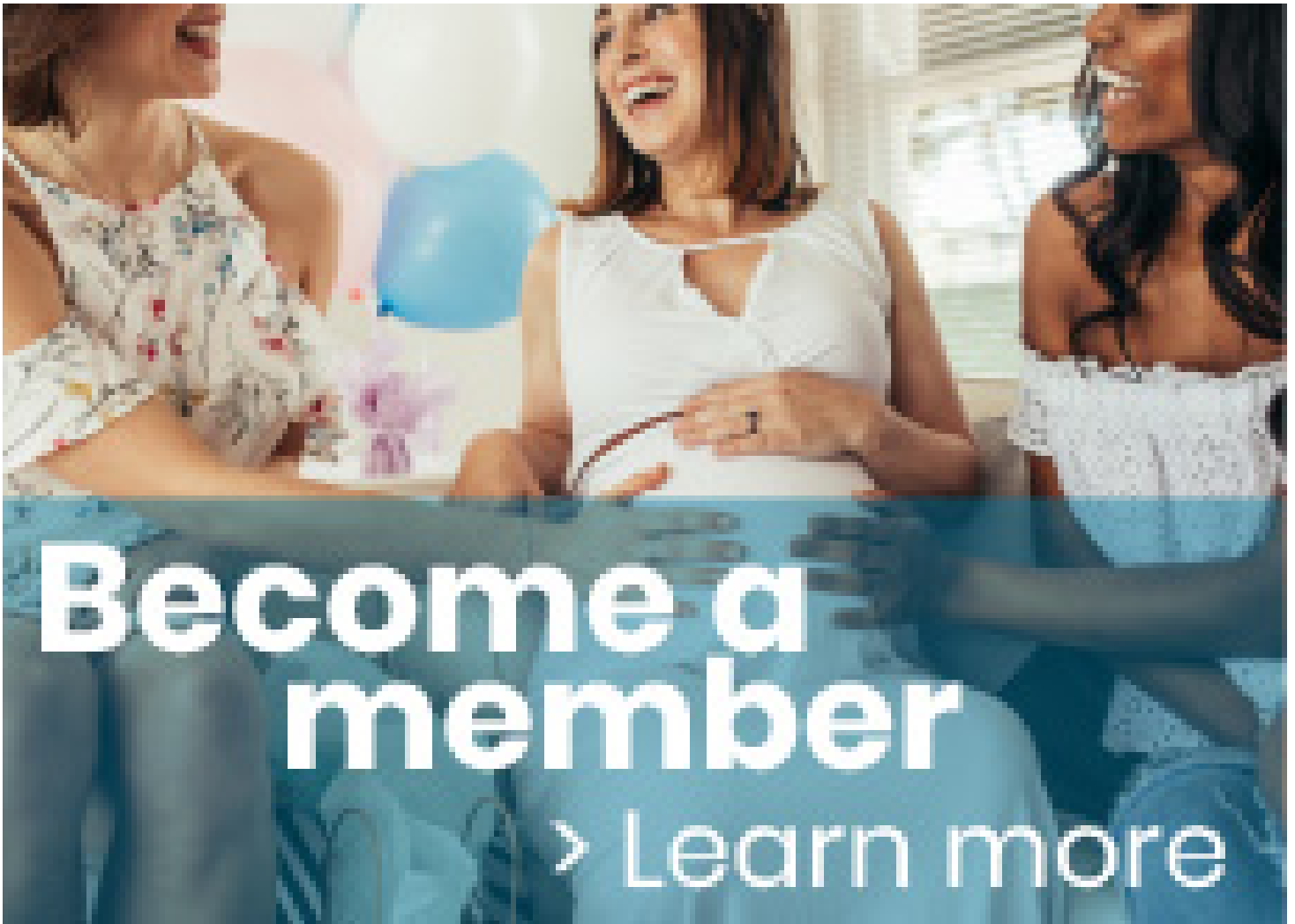
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