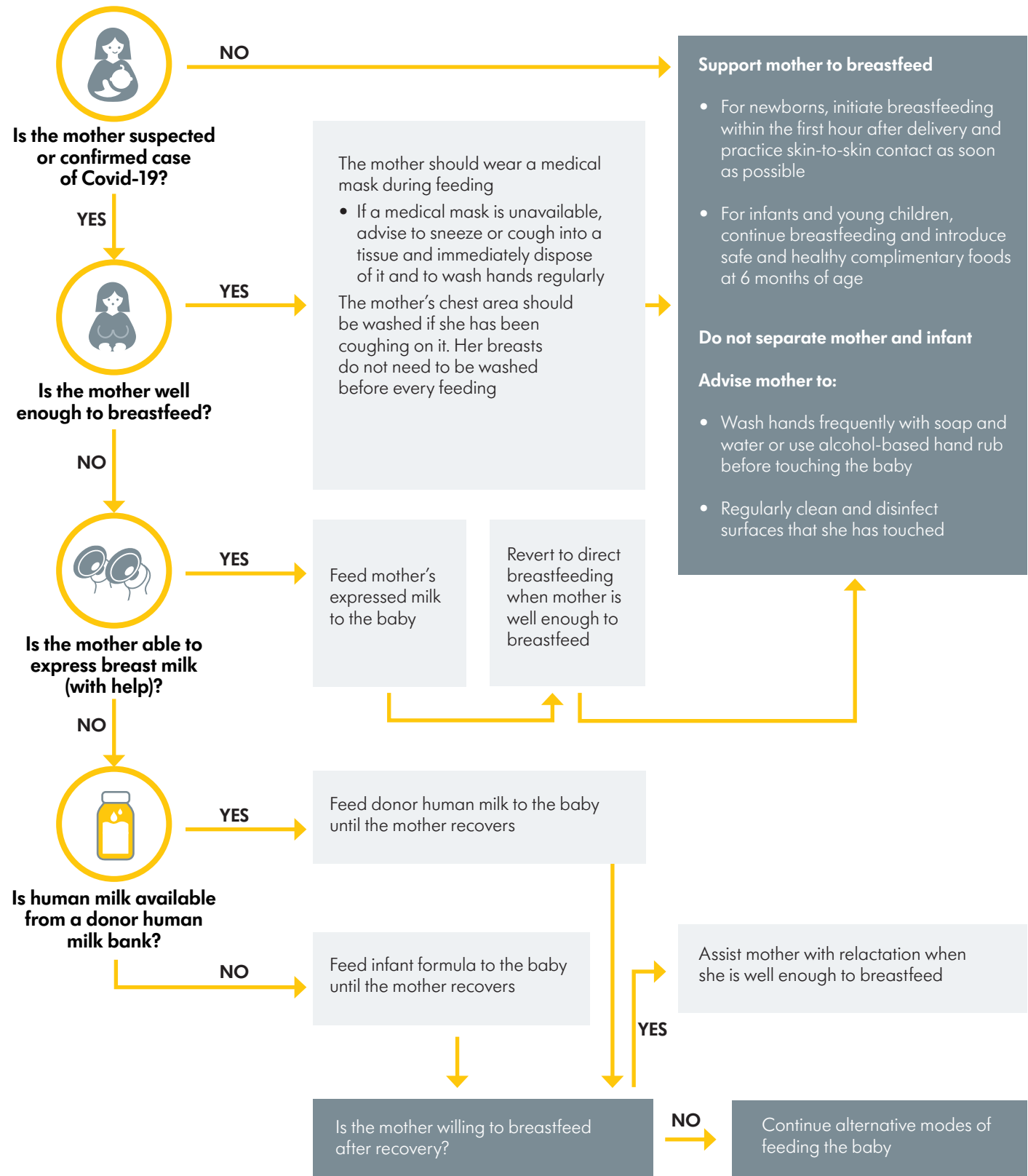


# Guidance for health care professionals: Breastfeeding and pumping during COVID-19



Based on the WHO Decision tree for breastfeeding in the context of COVID-19 (WHO. Frequently asked questions: Breastfeeding and COVID-19. For health care workers; 12 May 2020. Available from: <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/332719>)

## Guidance for health care professionals: Breastfeeding and pumping during COVID-19

Is it safe to breastfeed and keep mothers and infants together during Covid-19?

YES<sup>1</sup>

Is it safe to provide milk for an infant in the NICU if a mother has been exposed to COVID-19?

YES<sup>2</sup>

Is it safe to give expressed breast milk from a mother confirmed/suspected to have COVID-19?

YES<sup>1</sup>

If a mother is confirmed/suspected to have COVID-19, is infant formula safer for infants?

NO<sup>1</sup>

### The numerous benefits of breastfeeding substantially outweigh the potential risks of transmission and illness associated with COVID-19.<sup>1</sup>

#### Tips for keeping mothers and infants safe during the COVID-19 crisis<sup>3</sup>

- **Continue to breastfeed while taking care with hygiene.** The main risk for an infant to catch the virus is from close contact with the mother or another infected family member. If anyone is sick in the household, advise the mother to practice **The 3 Ws**.
- **Advise the mother to continue to breastfeed if she falls sick.**
- **If a mother is too sick to breastfeed,** feed the infant with expressed breast milk and seek immediate medical advice for the mother.
- **Take extra care when formula feeding.** If there is an instance where a mother is unable to breastfeed or where she has decided not to breastfeed, it is especially important that infants are fed according to the instructions on the infant formula packaging and that extra care is taken with thoroughly washing bottles, teats and any other equipment used. Follow **The 3 Ws**.

#### The 3 Ws:<sup>3</sup>

- **WEAR** a mask during feeding
- **WASH** hands with soap before and after touching the baby
- **WIPE** and disinfect surfaces regularly

#### Breast milk is the best source of nutrition for infants and protects them against illness:<sup>4</sup>

- Evidence is overwhelmingly in support of breastfeeding. Skin-to-skin contact and early, exclusive breastfeeding helps babies to thrive, and there is no reason to discontinue in the wake of this virus.
- To date, the transmission of the active virus that can cause infection through breast milk and breastfeeding has not been detected.
- Disruption of breastfeeding can lead to a drop in milk supply, refusal by the infant to take the breast, and a decrease in protective immune factors contained in breast milk.

**References:** **1** WHO. Frequently asked questions: Breastfeeding and COVID-19. For health care workers; 12 May 2020. Available from: <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/332719> **2** Meier PP, Patel AL. Is it safe to provide milk for my NICU baby if I have or have been exposed to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)?; FRLF; 2020 [cited 2020 Jul 24]. Available from: [https://www.larsson-rosenquist.org/media/1353/2003\\_nicu\\_babies\\_covid19.pdf](https://www.larsson-rosenquist.org/media/1353/2003_nicu_babies_covid19.pdf) **3** UNICEF. Breastfeeding during the COVID-19 pandemic; 2020 [cited 2020 Jul 21]. Available from: <https://www.unicef.org/eap/breastfeeding-during-covid-19> **4** UNICEF. Breastfeeding safely during the COVID-19 pandemic; 28 May 2020. Available from: <https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/breastfeeding-safely-during-covid-19-pandemic>