

COVID-19 and INFANT FORMULA FEEDING

Frequently Asked Questions

This handout is intended to provide families who are using infant formula, or are thinking about doing so, with information on how to safely feed their baby during the COVID-19 pandemic.

1. How do I protect myself, my baby, and my family against COVID-19?

Wash your hands well and often. Do not touch your face, eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands. Cover your mouth and nose with a disposable tissue or the crease of your elbow when you sneeze or cough. Clean and disinfect high touch surfaces often. Practice physical distancing and avoid others who are unwell. Limit the number of people who feed your baby. Check out [BCCDC Prevention](#) for more information on how you can help stop the spread of COVID-19.

2. What if I am breastfeeding and thinking about using infant formula, or need to give infant formula?

Currently, health experts have not found COVID-19 in human milk. Human milk has antibodies and immune factors that protect your baby's health through their infancy and childhood. Breastfeed your baby or feed them your expressed breast milk as often as possible. If you are concerned about your milk supply, help is available. You can contact your local [Public Health Services](#), [Lactation Consultants](#), and [La Leche League Leaders](#). For additional support you can call **8-1-1** to speak to a nurse or other health care professional at [HealthLinkBC](#).

If you're thinking about weaning, consider delaying if possible. If it's an option, consider increasing your milk supply or [relactation](#) (restarting breastfeeding after a gap). Learn more about breastfeeding during the COVID-19 pandemic [here](#).

3. What do I need to know about using infant formula safely?

For families who have made an informed decision to use infant formula, it's important to have all the information you need to safely prepare and store infant formula. Learn more in [Infant Formula: What You Need To Know](#) or at [HealthLinkBC](#). Hold your baby while feeding and follow their feeding cues; feed your baby when they are hungry and stop when they are full.

Always prepare infant formula as described on the product label. Do not dilute infant formula with extra water to make your supply last longer. This will not provide your baby with the nutrition needed for healthy growth.

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FAQ: COVID-19 and Infant Formula Feeding, *cont'd.*

4. What extra precautions are needed when using infant formula if I test positive for COVID-19 (or suspect that I have it)?

COVID-19 is spread by liquid droplets when a person coughs or sneezes. To reduce the risk of passing the virus to your baby, wash your hands before and after preparing infant formula, holding, and feeding your baby. Wear a mask while you are having symptoms (e.g., cough, sore throat, fever, sneezing) and clean and disinfect high touch surfaces often. See this guide to [self-isolation if you are ill](#) and this guide to [self-isolation for caregivers](#). As always, wash and disinfect formula preparation equipment and feeding supplies carefully after each use.

FEEDING YOUR BABY

Cleaning and Sterilizing Feeding Equipment

Keeping Everything Clean
All that equipment you use to feed your baby needs to be kept clean.
Breast pumps should be cleaned according to the manufacturer's instructions. Everything else – including artificial nipples, rings, caps, discs, measuring cups, can openers, storage containers and tongs – can be cleaned and disinfected simply in your kitchen.

DID YOU KNOW
Dishwashers aren't recommended for disinfecting infant feeding equipment.

HOW TO
Clean and disinfect infant feeding equipment

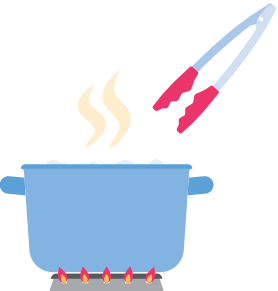
First – clean everything:

1. Wash your hands with soap and warm water.
2. Wash the sink with a clean dishcloth, soap and warm water.
3. Sanitize the counter by mixing 1 teaspoon (5 ml) of bleach with 3 cups (750 ml) of water in a labelled spray bottle. Spray the counter and wipe it with a clean towel.
4. Fill the sink with hot, soapy water.
5. Wash all infant feeding equipment.
6. Scrub the inside of containers and artificial nipples with a clean bottle brush.
7. Rinse everything with hot water and set it on a clean towel.

Then – disinfect everything:

1. Fill a large pot with water. Add the clean items. Make sure everything is covered with water and that there are no air pockets.
2. Bring the water to a boil. Let it boil, uncovered, for 2 minutes.
3. Take out the tongs. Once cool, use them to remove the other items.
4. Set everything on a clean towel to air dry.
5. Once dry, use the items right away. Or store them in a clean plastic bag or on a clean, dry towel covered with another clean towel.

If you use a store-bought disinfectant or sterilizer, follow the manufacturer's instructions.



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Baby's Best Chance

Excerpt from:
**Baby's Best Chance:
Parents' Handbook
of Pregnancy
and Baby Care**

5. Is it safe to hold my baby skin-to-skin or in Kangaroo Care if I have tested positive for COVID-19?

Holding your baby skin-to-skin and in Kangaroo Care, along with breastfeeding, will help your baby to thrive. To protect your baby from getting COVID-19, wash your hands before and after holding your baby. Wear a mask while you are having symptoms (e.g., cough, sore throat, fever, sneezing) and regularly clean and disinfect all surfaces.

If your baby is in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) and you test positive for COVID-19, you may not be able to enter the NICU until your respiratory symptoms are gone. Discuss with your baby's health care team their guidelines on parental presence.

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FAQ: COVID-19 and Infant Formula Feeding, *cont'd.*

6. Are there any concerns with infant formula product shortages?

Infant formula is available in retail and online stores. There is currently no shortage of infant formula in British Columbia. However, some stores have had some short-term shortages because of people buying more than they usually do.

Aim to have enough infant formula on hand to last for 14 days (two weeks). If you need to **self-isolate** due to COVID-19, stay at home. Ask friends or relatives who are well for help with buying infant formula and anything else you may need.

7. What if I am having difficulty buying infant formula?

If needed, healthy term babies can switch between brands and types of formula (i.e., ready-to-feed, liquid concentrate, or powder). Infant formulas labelled for use from 0 to 12 months are safe, unless your baby is on a special infant formula. It may be helpful to call retail stores to check for availability. Infant formula is also available online or directly from the manufacturer.

If you are having trouble finding infant formula, contact your health care provider, your local **Public Health Services** or community-based programs. You can also ask your **local food bank** if any infant formula is available.

8. Can I use homemade infant formula instead of breast milk or commercial formula?

Health experts do not recommend using homemade infant formulas. Homemade infant formulas may contain ingredients that are hard for babies to digest and may not provide the right nutrition for your baby to grow and develop.

If you are having trouble with feeding your baby contact your health care provider or call **8-1-1** to speak to a nurse or dietitian at **HealthLink BC**.

9. How/where do I get support during times of physical distancing?

It's normal to feel sad, stressed, confused, or scared during a crisis. Help is available.

Reach out for support from friends, family, peers, and/or health care providers. For additional support, call **8-1-1** to speak to a nurse or other health care professional at **HealthLinkBC**. You can also contact your local **Public Health Services** and **Pacific Post Partum Support Society**.

For the most trusted and up to date information about COVID-19, visit:
[BC Centre for Disease Control](#).

If you have concerns about COVID-19, discuss with your doctor, pediatrician, obstetrician, or midwife.