

Coronavirus with a baby: What you need to know to prepare and respond

March 13 2020, by Karleen Gribble and Nina Jane Chad



Credit: Thirdman from Pexels

If you have a baby, you may be worried about them catching the coronavirus, particularly after [media reports](#) of an Australian infant diagnosed with it.

The good news is, the evidence so far is babies [almost never get seriously ill from the coronavirus](#). And even if infected, they may [have no symptoms](#).

However, the coronavirus could affect infants in other ways. For instance, there may be difficulties accessing health care, consumer goods and child care.

Thinking about these possibilities now, and preparing for them, can help you manage what may come.

Health care access may be tricky, but there are ways

If the coronavirus becomes widespread, the [health system will struggle to cope for a while](#).

[Up to 20%](#) of people who get COVID-19 need treatment in hospital for up to two weeks or more.

Hospitals and general practices may be overwhelmed by others sick with the coronavirus, which may make it difficult to access [health care](#) if your baby gets sick for any reason.

Recognising this, the Australian government [recently announced](#) special provisions for parents of newborns to be bulk-billed when consulting a doctor or nurse [via phone](#) or videocall rather than in person.

There are also things you can do to help keep your baby healthy so they don't need medical treatment. By protecting them, you also protect the people around them who may be more vulnerable to serious illness from the coronavirus.

Think about hygiene

The first thing you can do is to practice good hygiene yourself. This includes frequently washing your hands, avoiding close contact with other people as much as you can, coughing or sneezing into your bent elbow or a tissue, and avoiding touching your [eyes, nose and mouth](#).

Because babies put their hands in their mouths no matter what, frequently washing their face and hands and cleaning surfaces and objects they might touch will help protect them from any infection.

How about daycare?

It will come as no surprise to most parents that babies who attend daycare are [sick more often](#).

That's because babies and small children have an immature immune system, are in very close contact with one another, and may end up [sharing saliva](#) with one another by mouthing and touching one another and the same toys.

So, if you can, keep your baby away from daycare. However, if you need to use it, when you pick up your baby from daycare, wash their hands and face, change their clothes, then wash your own hands, before scooping them into that big, warm hug.

Make sure vaccinations are up to date

Routine vaccination is the [safest, most effective way](#) to protect babies and children from illness.

So, keep your child's vaccinations up-to-date to minimise the chance

they'll need medical attention while the health system is dealing with the coronavirus.

If you're breastfeeding

Breast milk contains many ingredients to help prevent and fight infection. It is recommended babies be fed only breast milk until they are six months old and continue [breastfeeding](#) with other foods [into their second year of life](#).

If your baby is under six months and breastfeeding, offering them only [breast milk](#) protects them from a range of infections and [reduces their need](#) for [medical treatment](#) or hospitalisation.

If your baby is breastfeeding and using formula, consider replacing formula feeds with breastfeeds.

If you have stopped breastfeeding altogether, it is possible to start breastfeeding again if you want to (contact the national [Breastfeeding Helpline](#) for assistance).

If you have an older baby or toddler who is still breastfeeding, keeping breastfeeding will help protect them from other illnesses until after the coronavirus pandemic has passed.

If you're using formula

It is easy to accidentally introduce germs into bottles while you're preparing infant formula. So, because medical care may be hard to access, it is worth taking extra care to prevent this.

Be extra careful about [preparing bottles](#). This means always [washing](#)

[your hands thoroughly with soap](#), washing bottles thoroughly, sterilising them after every use, and [making up formula with hot water](#).

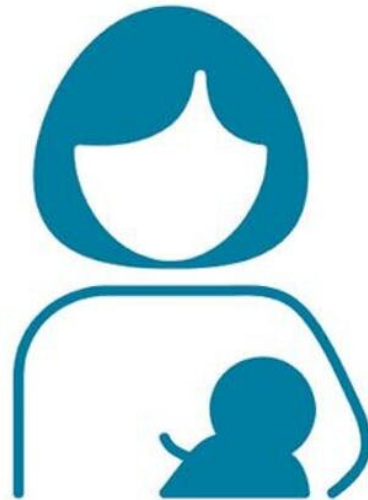
Remember to cool down the bottle in the fridge, give it a gentle shake, and check it's not too hot before giving it to your baby.



COVID-19 and breastfeeding.

Breastmilk provides protection against many illnesses.

Keep breastfeeding even if you are sick.



If you need help with breastfeeding, or want to restart, call 1800 686 268.



Breastfeeding Helpline
1800 mum 2 mum
1800 686 268

Visit
breastfeeding.asn.au

The National Breastfeeding Helpline is supported by funding from the Australian Government.

Keep breastfeeding, is the latest advice. Credit: Australian Breastfeeding

Association, Author provided

Shop for supplies, such as nappies

Supply chains may be disrupted if lots of people get ill. And you may not be able to shop if you need to self-isolate at home.

It is recommended you have [two to three weeks worth of supplies at home to prepare for this possibility](#). Consider stocking up on nappies for this length of time, or keeping washable (cloth) nappies on hand.

If you are formula feeding, buy enough infant formula for three weeks but check the expiry dates.

What if mum contracts the coronavirus?

Mothers [are more at risk](#) of becoming sick from the coronavirus than their [babies](#).

And if you're breastfeeding and you're infected, it is [recommended you continue breastfeeding](#). That's because the virus [has not been found in breastmilk](#).

Wearing a mask when you are with your baby (including during feeding), washing hands before and after contact with your baby, and cleaning and disinfecting surfaces and any feeding equipment [will help](#) prevent your baby catching the virus from you.

If you are hospitalised or separated from your baby, [you can express breastmilk for them](#).

Think about keeping grandparents safe

If you or your partner get ill, someone else may need to help care for the baby or other children.

Babies like to share their saliva with their caregivers and they may be infected with the coronavirus but have no symptoms. So they [may easily spread](#) the infection to the people looking after them.

Many parents call on grandparents to help with [child care](#). Unfortunately people [over 60](#) are the most likely to get seriously ill or die from the [coronavirus](#).

So, if your standby carers are over 60, now is the time to think about making alternate childcare arrangements.

Talk with grandparents about how they can reduce their risk of infection if they need to look after the baby.

This article is republished from [The Conversation](#) under a Creative Commons license. Read the [original article](#).

Provided by The Conversation

Citation: Coronavirus with a baby: What you need to know to prepare and respond (2020, March 13) retrieved 7 August 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-03-coronavirus-baby.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private

study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.