

Coronavirus and breastfeeding: Researchers clarify the facts

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As the COVID-19 virus situation continues to unfold, The University of Western Australia's lactation research team has put together information to help doctors and health professionals support breastfeeding mothers

by outlining the known facts.

Project lead UWA Senior Research Fellow Melinda Boss from the UWA Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences and the LactaResearch team had been contacted for advice by many mothers which prompted them to share information to help people make informed decisions.

"Mothers with newborns are grappling with a tiny human to look after, and also an environment of extreme uncertainty which can understandably be concerning, so it's important to arm them with the most up-to-date and [factual information](#)," Ms Boss said.

Ms Boss said that [health authorities](#) were still learning about the new virus every day, and it was important to understand that advice would vary for individuals based on their circumstances.

"However initial data shows that there is no evidence of transmitting the coronavirus through breastmilk and that children and babies are less affected than adults," she said.

"It's also important to remember that breastfeeding has enormous effects that would be prevented if replaced by alternative feeding methods such as using [infant formula](#).

"Some of those benefits include a boosted immune system with increased protection against respiratory infections and diarrhea.

"Close maternal-infant proximity also stimulates a healthy heart rate, body temperature, appetite, and other aspects of development in babies."

When making decisions Ms Boss said it was important to weigh up the benefits against the harms.

"And if in doubt, seek [medical advice](#), to ensure you have expert advice to make the best decisions," she said.

Ms Boss's team have developed a free online guidance site for doctors and [health professionals](#) called LactaMap which continues to be updated with current and factual breastfeeding information. To access LactaMap visit www.lactamap.com.

Provided by University of Western Australia

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