

COVID-infected mothers separated from their babies affects breastfeeding outcomes

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It may be safe for COVID-infected mothers to maintain contact with

their babies. Keeping them apart can cause maternal distress and have a negative effect on exclusive breastfeeding later in infancy, according to The COVID Mothers Study published in the peer-reviewed journal *Breastfeeding Medicine*.

In this worldwide study, infants who did not directly breastfeed, experience skin-to-[skin care](#), or who did not room-in within arms' reach of their [mothers](#) were less likely to be exclusively breastfed in the first 3 months of life. Nearly 60% of mothers who experienced separation reported feeling very distressed, and 78% reported at least moderate distress. Nearly 1/3 of separated mothers (29%) were unable to breastfeed once reunited with their infants, despite trying.

"Our research contributes to the emerging evidence that skin-to-skin care, rooming-in within arms' reach, and direct breastfeeding may be safe for mothers infected with SARS-CoV-2," said Melissa Bartick, MD, Mount Auburn Hospital, and coauthors.

Arthur I. Eidelman, MD, Editor-in-Chief of *Breastfeeding Medicine*, states: "This report strengthens the recommendation that breastfeeding should be continued to be encouraged and supported in this era of the COVID-19 pandemic and that direct breastfeeding is indicated for mothers infected with SARS-CoV-2."

More information: Melissa C. Bartick et al, Maternal and Infant Outcomes Associated with Maternity Practices Related to COVID-19: The COVID Mothers Study, *Breastfeeding Medicine* (2021). [DOI: 10.1089/bfm.2020.0353](https://doi.org/10.1089/bfm.2020.0353)

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