

Information for parents on infant feeding during Covid-19 (Coronavirus) outbreak

Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding can help reduce the risk of babies developing infectious diseases. A large number of live ingredients in human milk help to destroy harmful bacteria and viruses; it also helps boost the baby's immune system. Considering the protection that human milk and breastfeeding offers baby and the low risk of transmission of respiratory viruses, breastfeeding remains the healthiest way to feed baby during the Covid-19 (Coronavirus) outbreak.

To help support breastfeeding it is recommended that mothers and babies stay together as much as possible, have skin-to-skin contact, feed their baby responsively and seek support when needed. Support is available to help mothers maximise the amount of breastmilk they are able to give or to help return to breastfeeding.

If mothers are considering stopping breastfeeding, it is worth considering the value of continuing during the Covid-19 outbreak. Support is available from the [health visiting team](#) or you can email Flying Start on flyngstart@luton.gov.uk.

If you are breastfeeding while infected (Public Health England guidance)

There is currently no clinical evidence to suggest that the virus can be transmitted through breastmilk. Infection can be spread to the baby in the same way as to anyone in close contact with you. The benefits of breastfeeding outweigh any potential risks of transmission of the virus through breastmilk or by being in close contact with your child, however, this will be an individual decision and can be discussed with your midwife, health visitor or GP by telephone. If you wish to breastfeed, take precautions to limit the potential spread of COVID-19 to the baby by:

- washing your hands before touching the baby, breast pump or bottles
- avoiding coughing or sneezing on the baby while feeding at the breast
- cleaning any breast pump as recommended by the manufacturer after each use
- considering asking someone who is well to feed your expressed breastmilk to the baby
- If you are feeding with formula or expressed milk, sterilise the equipment carefully before each use. You should not share bottles or a breast pump with someone else.

You can find more information on the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and Public Health England websites. Unicef UK Baby Friendly Initiative | Infant feeding during Covid-19 outbreak 2

Support and information on feeding

Free information and support is available

- Free Breastfeeding Hub App: www.breastfeedinghub.org
- National Breastfeeding Helpline: 0300 100 0212 (9.30am-9.30pm, 7 days per week) www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk
- Sling information: www.carryingmatters.co.uk
- www.flyingstartluton.com/parenting/information/feeding/

Formula feeding

For babies that are formula fed continue adhering to current guidance on washing and sterilising equipment. It is recommended that babies that are bottle fed are fed responsively, this means hold baby close and be led by baby, follow babies cues for when they need a break and gently remove teat or bring bottle downwards to stop milk flow, never force a full feed look out for signs they have had enough and limit the number of people who feed baby.

PACE the feeds:

P- Positioning, hold baby fairly upright so they can control the flow. Change sides so baby gets a different view, make eye contact!

A- Ask permission, tease baby's upper lip so that they reach to accept for the teat themselves

C- Cover the hole, but don't fill the teat. This will let baby's sucking dictate how much is removed from the bottle. Hold bottle almost horizontally, not upright.

E- Easy does it! Allow baby to take breaks as and when they need it.

D-Don't encourage the baby to take the full bottle if they are showing signs of being full.

Accessing infant formula – information from First Steps Nutrition Trust

There are reports of parents being unable to purchase infant formula. We have been informed that retailers **do** have stock and continued supplies of infant formula at this time. The main reason shelves have been bare in some shops is because of stockpiling. The major retailers will now limit purchases of infant formula to 2-4 tins per customer to ensure that there is fair distribution.

Local stores, pharmacies and corner shops do not seem to be experiencing the same empty shelves that the main supermarkets have had. Many pharmacies will order products for their customers if asked.

Stage 1 / first infant formula should be used for infants in the first year of life

- If you are unable to get your usual brand of first infant formula, don't worry – you can use any first infant formula as all preparations have a similar nutritional composition to comply with legislation.
- Don't use stage 2 follow on formula for any baby under 6 months – only use first infant formula.
- If you are using follow on formula for a baby older than 6 months and cannot access this, then use first infant formula.
- If you are using other milks such as anti-reflux milk, comfort milk, etc. and can't access these, then use first infant formula.

Always make up infant formula as per manufacturers guidance – do not be tempted to add more water to make it last longer as diluting the milk could endanger your baby's health.

Information for parents on bottle-feeding can be found at:

<https://www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly/baby-friendly-resources/bottle-feeding-resources/infant-formula-responsive-bottle-feeding-guide-for-parents/>

Supporting close and loving relationships

Regardless of feeding method, it is essential that babies' needs for emotional attachment with their parents / primary caregiver is met. Keeping babies close and responding to their need for food, love and comfort are all essential for babies' health, wellbeing and development. In addition, this will enhance mothers' mental wellbeing in the postnatal period.