



# PARENTS

## Feeding Your Baby

While influenza is circulating in a community, parents need to take extra precautions to ensure the safety of their children, especially infants under six months old, who are too young to be vaccinated against seasonal flu, and children under five years old, who are at highest risk for developing complications from influenza.

Parents who are sick with influenza are encouraged to find someone who is not sick to feed their infant. If there is no one else to feed the child, parents are encouraged to wear a facemask at all times while feeding or caring for the infant. Using a blanket as a barrier between infant and parent may also help. Parents should also be vigilant to wash their hands frequently with soap and warm water, especially before touching the infant, before feeding the infant and after coughing, sneezing or changing a diaper.

Mothers who are breastfeeding are encouraged to express their breastmilk and allow another person who is not sick to feed their infant. Ideally babies less than six months old should get their feedings from breastmilk. If no one is available to help, breastfeeding mothers who are sick are encouraged to wear a face mask and limit their direct face-to-face contact with their infant as he breastfeeds.

Breastfeeding mothers who are not yet sick, but believe they have been exposed to H1N1 influenza should continue breastfeeding their infant. Mothers make antibodies to fight diseases they have come in contact with, so their breastmilk is custom-made to fight the disease their babies are exposed to as well.

Since H1N1 is a new virus, there is not enough information yet to know how much protection breastmilk will provide against it. However, breastmilk is proven to help protect infants from other flu viruses and infections and boosts their immune system.

If an infant is sick with influenza, breastfeeding is one of the best things a mother can do for the baby. Mothers are encouraged to give their infants plenty of chances to breastfeed throughout the illness, because infants who are sick need more fluids. Breastmilk is better for the baby than water, juice or electrolyte drinks, because it keeps the baby hydrated and helps protect his immune system. If the infant is too sick to breastfeed, he can drink expressed breastmilk from a cup, bottle, syringe or eye-dropper.