

April 8, 2020



## Health Nexus Weekly Bulletin

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**COVID-19 - FAMILY HEALTH AND WELLBEING**

**COVID-19 TRANSMISSION DURING PREGNANCY AND BIRTH**

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During these uncertain times, the information and evidence on COVID-19 is being updated day by day.

Researchers continue to gather evidence about the vertical transmission of COVID-19 from a mother with a confirmed case of COVID-19 to a fetus, and the new study published online by [\*Journal of the American Medical Association Pediatrics\*](#) on March 26th, 2020, suggests that vertical transmission may not be ruled out.

Vertical transmission refers to a transfer of a bacteria or a virus from a mother to a baby during pregnancy or delivery.

The study followed 33 infants born to COVID-19 positive mothers in Wuhan, China. Three out of 33 infants showed an early-onset of COVID-19 infection and tested positive in the first days of life. The clinical symptoms, however, were mild and outcomes were favorable, and all three infants tested negative for COVID-19 by

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day 7.

Even though previous studies did not show any clinical finding or investigation of vertical transmission, this study cannot rule it out, as all three infants were born via cesarian section and it was reported that strict infection prevention and control measures were in place during delivery.

In response to the emerging evidence, on April 6th, 2020, the Canadian Paediatric Society issued a new practice point on "[Delivery room considerations for infants born to mothers with suspected or proven COVID-19](#)". The brief highlighted the results of the study above and stated that the possibility of vertical transmission remains under active review; however, they confirmed that based on other evidence and resources, "vertical transmission remains highly unlikely, but further case reporting and timely testing is needed".

Resources:

- The Canadian Paediatric Society: practice point on "[Delivery room considerations for infants born to mothers with suspected or proven COVID-19](#)".
- Zeng L, Xia S, Yuan W, et al. Neonatal Early-Onset Infection With SARS-CoV-2 in 33 Neonates Born to Mothers With COVID-19 in Wuhan, China. *JAMA Pediatr*. Published online March 26, 2020. doi:10.1001/jamapediatrics.2020.0878 <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapediatrics/fullarticle/2763787>

**SKIN-TO-SKIN AND BREASTFEEDING AND COVID-19**

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Skin-to-skin contact between a parent and a newborn immediately after birth is essential for infant adjustment and has many long-lasting benefits.

Skin-to-skin helps regulate the baby's temperature, breathing, heart rate, and sugar levels. It also calms the baby so he doesn't get stressed out or cry a lot. It is easier for many babies to latch on to the breast when held skin-to-skin. It is good for both full-term and premature babies (La Leche League Canada (LLLC), 2020).

During COVID-19 pandemic, skin-to-skin should not be delayed.

Mothers with a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19 can check with their doctor or midwife to see what is the best approach in their situation. However, based on the recent practice point released on April 6th, 2020, by the [Canadian Pediatric Society](#), "mothers with suspected or proven COVID-19 and their infants should not be completely separated [and] mothers and infants should be allowed to remain together, after potential risks and benefits of rooming-in have been discussed, allowing for shared decision-making with families and their health care providers".

According to [Health Canada](#), COVID-19 can be spread from an infected person through:

- respiratory droplets;
- close, prolonged personal contact; and
- touching an infected area, then touching mouth, nose or eyes before washing hands.

However, due to lack of evidence supporting the transmission of COVID-19 from a parent to an infant after birth or during breastfeeding (in the circumstances when all infection prevention and control measures were in place), and the importance of breastfeeding to the health of the infant and the mother, Health Canada [recommends that breastfeeding continue](#).

WHO has developed a guideline on [Clinical Management of Severe Acute](#)

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[Respiratory Infection when COVID-19 is Suspected](#). The guideline was released on March 13th, 2020, and states that "mothers and infants should be enabled to remain together and practice skin-to-skin contact, kangaroo mother care and to remain together and to practice rooming-in throughout the day and night, especially immediately after birth during the establishment of breastfeeding, whether they or their infants have suspected, probable or confirmed COVID-19 virus infection" (WHO, 2020).

Also, WHO recommends that "as with all confirmed or suspected COVID-19 cases, symptomatic mothers who are breastfeeding or practicing skin-to-skin contact or kangaroo mother care should practice respiratory hygiene, including during feeding (for example, use of a medical mask when near a child if with respiratory symptoms), perform hand hygiene before and after contact with the child, and routinely clean and disinfect surfaces which the symptomatic mother has been in contact with" (WHO, 2020). The same hygiene practices are supported by the [Canadian Paediatric Society](#).

All families should also be encouraged to recognize the benefits of breastfeeding during COVID-19 pandemic. As stated by the [International Lactation Consultant Association](#) (2020), breastfeeding protects infants and young children against infectious diseases, as when a lactating parent becomes ill with a virus, they develop the antibodies to fight the illness which then are passed to an infant through breastmilk.

[La Leche League International \(LLL\)](#) also states that if a parent is breastfeeding and becomes ill, it is important not to interrupt direct breastfeeding, as the baby has been already exposed to the virus and will benefit most from continued direct breastfeeding. Moreover, "interruption of breastfeeding may actually increase the infant's risk of becoming ill and even of becoming severely ill (LLL, 2020).

Mothers who are unable to breastfeed because of being sick due to COVID-19 or other complications should be encouraged and supported to express milk, which can be safely supplied to the infant with proper infection prevention and control measures in place ([Canadian Paediatric Society](#), 2020).

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Additional resources and references can be found here:

- Health Canada Coronavirus disease (COVID-19): For health professionals. <https://bit.ly/2xLY74p>
- Canadian Paediatric Society practice point on Breastfeeding when mothers have suspected or proven COVID-19. <https://bit.ly/2V4vOq9>
- WHO guidelines on Clinical Management of Severe Acute Respiratory Infection when COVID-19 is Suspected. <https://bit.ly/3dljzla>
- Health Canada resources on Public health management of cases and contacts associated with novel coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). <https://bit.ly/2UzRVWe>
- ILCA Statement on Breastfeeding and Lactation Support During the COVID-19 Pandemic. <https://bit.ly/3aPgy6U>
- SafelyFed COVID-19 Infant Feeding Resources. <https://bit.ly/3aFAEjY>
- Updated SOGC Committee Opinion – COVID-19 in Pregnancy. <https://bit.ly/3aEiXS4>
- La Leche League International (LLLI) statement on Continuing to Nurse Your Baby Through Coronavirus (2019-nCoV; COVID-19) and Other Respiratory Infections. <https://www.llli.org/coronavirus/>

**MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

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During these difficult times, parents and families may experience the negative effects of physical distancing and isolation on their mental health.

[The provincial](#) and federal governments are working to increase the support for communities and front-line providers for mental health promotion and illness prevention.

Parents and families are encouraged to access the following resources during COVID-19 pandemic and beyond:

- Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) [BounceBack Ontario Program](#). It is designed to help adults and youth 15+ manage low mood, mild to moderate depression and anxiety, stress or worry. Delivered over the phone with a coach and through online videos, individuals will get access to tools that will support them on their path to mental wellness.
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- [KidsHelpPhone](#) e-mental health service that remains open for young people across Canada 24/7 without any face-to-face contact.
- [Big White Wall](#) is an online service providing access to people with anxiety, depression and other common mental health issues.
- Article by [Ryan Van Lieshout](#), highlighting resources and insights on managing postpartum depression in New moms isolated by coronavirus pandemic.
- First Nations and Inuit [Hope for Wellness Help Line](#) offers immediate help to all Indigenous peoples across Canada.
- [Crisis Services Canada](#) is a national network of existing distress, crisis and suicide prevention line services
- [ConnexOntario](#) provides free and confidential health services information for people experiencing problems with alcohol and drugs, mental illness and/or gambling. The navigation and information service is live-answer 24/7.
- [Ottawa Public Health Unit](#): Mental Health and COVID-19 resources page contains contact information regarding phone, text and chat mental health resources, as well as information for parents, children, and youth.

*References:*

- Newsletter - Ontario Increasing Mental Health Support During COVID-19. <https://bit.ly/3dQZHCI>
  - KidsHelpPhone.ca <https://kidshelpphone.ca>
  - BounceBack Ontario. <https://bouncebackontario.ca>
  - Big White Wall. <https://www.bigwhitewall.com>
  - Article by Ryan Van Lieshout <https://bit.ly/3e2W5xx>
  - First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line. <https://www.hopeforwellness.ca/>
  - Crisis Services Canada. <https://www.crisisservicescanada.ca/en>
  - ConnexOntario <https://www.connexontario.ca>
  - Ottawa Public Health Unit: Mental Health and COVID-19 Resources page. <https://bit.ly/2xW4WAw>
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## HEALTH NEXUS SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC



In partnership with [Life with a Baby](#), Health Nexus has launched a series of webinars on topics relevant to families and children during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The webinars are planned to occur weekly for the period of COVID-19 pandemic and feature guest speakers and experts from different fields of practice.

On March 25th, 2020, the first webinar debuted addressing *parental anxiety during social distancing*. To listen to the webinar, please go to:

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/recording/7567216560642617100>

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The second webinar was hosted on April 1st, 2020, and covered the topic of *being pregnant and having a baby during the COVID-19 pandemic*. <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/recording/624095300508239373>

If you would like to find out more about this initiative, as well as register for the upcoming webinars, please contact Health Nexus Team Lead Hiltrud Dawson at [h.dawson@healthnexus.ca](mailto:h.dawson@healthnexus.ca).

For other webinars and recordings, please visit <http://en.beststart.org/events/webinar-recordings> (ENGLISH)  
<http://www.fr.meilleurdepart.org/event/enregistrements-des-webinaires> (FRENCH)

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## COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND CHILD RESILIENCE



Helping a child to build resilience is very important, especially in the early years.

*Resilience* is the ability to steer through serious life challenges and find ways to bounce back and to thrive.

Last week we have already discussed the main components of [Brain Story](#) to help parents cope with this difficult time and support their children.

This week we would like to highlight outside supports and inner strengths helping children build resilience from birth to six years old.

We need both outside supports and inner strengths to build our resilience.

Outside supports include:

- caring relationships
- positive role models in families and communities
- community resources such as community centres, parent-child drop-in centers, faith groups, or support programs for children with special needs

Inner strengths include:

- self-control
- thinking skills
- confidence
- positive outlook
- responsibility and participation

Outside supports and inner strengths work together to develop our resilience.

To learn more, please access [Building Resilience in Young Children](#) Health Nexus Best Start Booklet.

Reaching IN...Reaching OUT has also issued a [RecilienC E-Newsbrief](#) with a variety of resources and techniques helping parents support children during COVID-19 Pandemic, which can be helpful for both, families and providers.

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## VIRTUAL PARENTAL RESOURCES

During these difficult times, families and providers can access a variety of virtual resources helping them address the challenges arising during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Here are some of the examples of online resources and supports:

- Virtual YMCA: [Mind, Body, Spirit Initiative](#) for communities.
- [Life with a Baby](#) virtual resources for families (sign-up for the newsletter to receive supports).
- City of Toronto [Welcome to Parenting](#) online program.
- Triple P Canada: [Top Ten Tips for parenting through uncertain times.](#)
- [Mother's Program: COVID-19 Resources](#) (including radio podcasts and information on existing online parental support groups).
- [HiMama](#) webinars for Parents and ECEs on distance learning during COVID-19 Pandemic.
- [People for Education](#) Tips and Strategies on Home Schooling for families.
- [BC Council for Families](#) Resources and Ideas to Support BC Families During the COVID-19 Pandemic (including links to activities scheduling ideas).

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR MATERNAL CHILD HEALTH PROVIDERS

Clinical and community maternal child health providers can access the following resources to guide their practice and support for children and families:

- [Children's Healthcare Canada: Virtual Resources and Webinars for Providers.](#) <https://bit.ly/39PDwK1>
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- [Canadian Association of Perinatal and Women's Health Nurses](#): COVID-19 Suggestions for the care of the perinatal population. <https://bit.ly/39S0PTj>
- [Canadian Paediatric Society](#) practice point on NICU care for infants born to mothers with suspected or proven COVID-19. <https://bit.ly/3bUCw8J>

## COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

### **Collective Initiatives to Address Determinants of Health During COVID-19 Pandemic.**

It is evident that the COVID-19 Pandemic has reinforced the barriers that are already being faced by communities living in low socio-economic circumstances.

Organizations right now are calling for a collective action to address this impact on marginalized and vulnerable populations.

[National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health](#) has organized conversation series on Health Equity, Determinants of Health and COVID-19 Pandemic.

Health Nexus also continues to consult and collaborate with experts to enhance our response to vulnerable populations during these unprecedented times and develops strategies to support parents and children currently facing barriers to family and child-centred care.

Health Nexus uses its resources and expertise to address the determinants of health in our communication with providers and the public, and strives to highlight the needs of the populations that are negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

To help us get insights about how your sector or a community was affected by COVID-19 pandemic, please email to [h.dawson@healthnexus.ca](mailto:h.dawson@healthnexus.ca).

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Visit [our resources page](#) to discover all our many evidence-based, up-to-date resources!

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**We have moved! Our new location is:**

**Nous avons déménagé ! Notre nouvelle adresse :**

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