

# Nutrition News

Department of Human Nutrition



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## Continued Breastfeeding Recommended for Infants During Influenza Outbreak

Breastfeeding helps infants combat infection, and it is especially important for minimizing the risk and severity of influenza, including the current H1N1 influenza virus (also known as the “swine flu” virus) outbreak.

New guidelines for physicians released by the American Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine (ABM) urge physicians to **support continued breastfeeding even if the mother is infected with the H1N1 virus.** Since the infant would likely have been exposed to the virus before the mother became ill, continued breastfeeding may help limit the severity of respiratory symptoms, or breathing-related problems, in infants that become ill.

Breastfeeding mothers are encouraged to continue breastfeeding even if the mother is taking either of the two antiviral medications prescribed to treat or prevent influenza infection.

Breastfeeding should also continue if the infant becomes ill with suspected H1N1 flu. Physicians of the ABM recommend that if breast milk is only part of the infant’s diet, increasing the amount of breast milk offered during the influenza outbreak (by supplementing with expressed or pumped milk) is a suggested move for positive infant health.

Other public health recommendations including careful, frequent hand washing and limited contact

with non-caretakers and crowds are recommended to reduce infant exposure to flu.

The ABM reminds physicians and health professionals that breast milk offers many “antiviral and immune boosting components” that help protect the infant, even if the mother has not yet formed the specific immunity to a particular illness.

Source: Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine (2009). Breastfeeding/swine flu recommendations for physicians from the Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine. Accessed at <http://www.bfmed.org/> on 5/12/09.

For more information about healthy eating, contact your local extension office. The Food Assistance Program can help people of all ages with low income buy nutritious foods for a better diet. To find out more, call toll-free 1-888-369-4777.

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In each case, credit **Sandy Procter**, PhD, RD, LD, Extension Specialist, Maternal and Child Nutrition and Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) Coordinator, Department of Human Nutrition; Kansas State University; *Continued Breastfeeding Recommended for Infants During Influenza Outbreak*. May 2009.

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