

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS COVID-19 VACCINES AND BREASTFEEDING

1. Can women currently breastfeeding or providing expressed breast milk receive COVID-19 vaccines?

Yes. WHO recommends that if a lactating woman is part of a 'high risk' group such as a healthcare worker or part of a high- risk group recommended for vaccination (e.g. women with diabetes and/or obesity), vaccination CAN be offered. Therefore, healthy women currently breastfeeding or expressing breast milk may choose to be vaccinated.

2. What do women who are currently breastfeeding or expressing breast milk need to know about the vaccine?

- a) Breastfeeding is vital to the health of babies and their mothers.
- b) COVID-19 vaccines do NOT contain the virus so they cannot cause the infection.
- c) No studies have specifically investigated whether COVID-19 vaccines get into breast milk. Even if they enter the breast milk, they are unlikely to pose a risk to the breastfeeding child.
- d) Antibodies in breast milk are widely known to help protect babies against a wide range of infections. Antibodies against the virus have been detected in the milk of mothers who have been infected with COVID-19. So, getting vaccinated could mean antibodies triggered by the vaccine may also pass into the breast milk and therefore help to protect the breastfeeding child against COVID-19.

3. Is it safe for mothers to breastfeed after they are vaccinated?

Yes. According to WHO, mothers who are vaccinated should be encouraged to continue breastfeeding to protect their breastfeeding child.

4. Can / will the vaccine decrease milk supply?

It is highly unlikely that vaccination will affect women's ability to produce milk. Women currently breastfeeding or expressing breast milk can be confident that vaccination will not affect their milk supply.

Reference:

IFE Core Group, UNICEF, COVID-19 Infant Feeding Working Group. Frequently asked questions: COVID-19 mRNA vaccines and breastfeeding based on WHO SAGE interim recommendations (10 February 2021).
<https://www.enonline.net/breastfeedingandcovid19vaccines>