

Guideline: Handling of Breast Milk for Mothers who are COVID-19 (+) or PUI

This document is a guideline for the use, collection, and transport of breast milk provided by mothers who are COVID-19 positive or are persons under investigation (PUI). Recommendations are changing frequently and these guidelines may not reflect the most recent information available. In some cases, clinical judgement may warrant additional considerations.

Neonates born to mothers who are COVID-19 (+) or PUI will be kept in NICU room A8 until COVID-19 testing results are available. The mother is not allowed to visit the NICU while COVID (+) or a PUI. Provision of expressed breast milk to the neonate in such situations is encouraged. Mothers must be instructed in hand hygiene and the use a mask while pumping breast milk. No need to wash breasts. Milk containers are wiped cleaned and transported by staff to NICU.

Mother:

- Perform excellent hand hygiene, especially immediately before touching baby or breasts.
- Keep breasts covered so they don't become contaminated from respiratory secretions. (If breasts do become contaminated with respiratory secretions, wash breasts with soap and water, a germicidal disposable wipe designed for hands, or take a shower.)
- Wear a mask during breastfeeding or collection of colostrum/milk. (NOTE: Hand hygiene and cough etiquette around these activities are essential for all families and should be taught with teach-back for all patients to do both in hospital and at home).

Collecting milk:

- Breast milk is collected every 3 hours (8 times/day). Patient washes hands before breastfeeding or expressing milk and puts on mask and gloves.
- Wipe the surface where syringes/bottles will be placed after collection with a germicidal disposable wipe, and cover surface with clean paper towel or cloth.
- Patient collects breast milk by hand or by pump into clean syringes or bottles.

Cleaning the outside of the breast milk container:

- Ensure syringe/bottle cap is secured.
- Wipe down syringe or bottle with germicidal disposable wipe.

Getting milk ready for transport:

- Label syringes or bottles as usual with patient stickers, date/time.
- Second label should be affixed to the outside of the plastic bag for identification of the milk.
- Place bottles of breast milk in clear bag.
- Unless needed in the NICU immediately, milk may be stored in patient's room refrigerator until HCW staff can walk it down to the NICU. DO NOT PUT BREAST MILK IN PNEUMATIC TUBE SYSTEM

When ready to transport milk to the NICU:

- Patient's RN dons PPE (protective eyewear, mask, gown, gloves) and retrieves milk from the bag from patient's room.
- 2nd HCW is outside of the patient room. The 2nd HCW does hand hygiene and dons a clean set of gloves to receive the disinfected syringes/bottles into a clean bag.
- Patient's HCW alerts baby's NICU nurse before transport, and then walks the milk to the NICU.
- WIC staff carries the breastmilk directly to the infant's room

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NICU:

- NICU RN (while wearing PPE) receives bag of bottled breastmilk in the doorway between the anteroom and hallway
- Clean work surface with sanitizing wipe.
- Wipe the outside of the syringe or bottle with sanitizing wipe and allows it to dry before placing in refrigerator or feeding to baby.
- Clean work surface with sterilizing wipe.
- If milk is placed in the refrigerator or freezer, it will be placed in a plastic bin and covered with a plastic bag.

Milk coming from home:

- Send family home with sterile milk collection bottles (multiple days' worth) and clear storage bags.
- Instruct mother on labeling and storing milk; highlighting milk storage times. Remind her to wash her hands every time before pumping. Mom should wear a mask when pumping.
- Mother will pump into bottles.
- Support person at home wipes bottles down with sanitizing wipes, label with patient label, date and time of pumping. Place into zip closure, clear storage bag and secure.
- Support person will bring milk to the hospital.
- At hospital, milk is brought up to NICU in enclosed bag by support person to the infant's room
- NICU RN (while wearing PPE) receives bag of breastmilk in the doorway between the anteroom and hallway
- Clean work surface with sanitizing wipe.
- Wipe the outside of the syringe or bottle with sanitizing wipe and allow it to dry before placing in refrigerator or feeding to baby.
- Clean the work surface with a sanitizing wipe
- Milk stored in the refrigerator/freezer will be placed in a plastic storage bin. The bin will be enclosed in a plastic bag.