



Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine

For immediate release

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Breastfeeding / Swine Flu Recommendations for Physicians from the Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine

New Rochelle, NY, May 12, 2009—Breastfeeding can limit the severity of respiratory infections in infants and is particularly important for minimizing the risk and effects of infection during an influenza outbreak, such as the current H1N1 influenza virus (also known as the “swine flu”) outbreak, according to recommendations released by the **Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine** (ABM). The Academy’s complete recommendations are available online at www.bfmed.org

The new guidelines presented by ABM urge physicians to support continued breastfeeding even if the mother is suspected of having the H1N1 influenza virus, since the infant would likely have been exposed to the virus before the mother’s symptoms appeared. Continued breastfeeding may help limit the severity of respiratory symptoms in infants that become infected.

Other key recommendations encourage continued breastfeeding even if the mother is taking either of the two antiviral medications prescribed to treat or prevent influenza infection (oseltamivir or zanamivir). Breastfeeding should also continue if an infant becomes ill with suspected H1N1 flu. Furthermore, if breast milk is only part of an infant’s diet, it would be wise to increase the amount of breast milk the infant receives during an influenza outbreak, perhaps supplementing breastfeeding with expressed or pumped milk.

Good hygiene, including regular hand washing around the baby, can help minimize exposure to respiratory droplets that may carry the flu virus. Limiting close contact by non-caretakers, use of a mask if a caretaker has flu-like or other respiratory symptoms, and avoiding crowds are other recommended actions to reduce risk of infant exposure. According to ABM President, Caroline J. Chantry, MD, “It is timely for physicians to be reminded that breast milk contains a myriad of antiviral and immune boosting components beyond specific antibodies that will help protect the infant even when a mother does not have preexisting immunity to a particular illness.”

The **Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine** is a global organization of physicians dedicated to the promotion, protection, and support of breastfeeding through education, research, and advocacy.

The Official Journal of ABM, ***Breastfeeding Medicine*** (www.liebertpub.com/bfm), is an authoritative, peer-reviewed, multidisciplinary journal published quarterly. The Journal publishes original scientific articles, reviews, and case studies on a broad spectrum of topics in lactation medicine. It presents evidence-based research advances and explores the immediate and long-term outcomes of breastfeeding, including the epidemiologic, physiologic, and psychological benefits of breastfeeding.

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