

COVID-19 pandemic may have decreased breastfeeding

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The COVID-19 pandemic has had many health impacts on families. While exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life is recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Centers

for Disease Control for its benefits to immunity, bonding and health, mothers were less likely to breastfeed during the pandemic, according to research presented during the 2022 AAP National Conference & Exhibition.

Authors of the abstract, "The Effect of SARS-CoV-2 on the Rates of Breastfeeding in the Newborn Nursery," found an 11% decrease in the rate of exclusive breastfeeding and a 4% decrease in any breastfeeding during the COVID [pandemic](#) in comparison to before.

"There is a false belief that breastfeeding is a natural instinct that's supposed to happen out of thin air. Breastfeeding is a technique that both the mother and baby need to learn," said Dr. Amy Yeh, Assistant Professor of Pediatrics, Director of Neonatal-Perinatal Medicine Fellowship Education, Division of Neonatology, Keck School of Medicine of University of Southern California and Attending Neonatologist, LAC+USC Medical Center. "Every mother, baby and dad is unique. It is picking up on the cues of the baby and figuring out what works for both mother and baby. It becomes easier with time. Remember: Mother's milk is gold."

This study compared [breastfeeding rates](#) between neonates at the LAC+USC Medical Center Newborn Nursery from January 2019 to April 2021. Researchers considered all neonates born prior to April 2020 as pre-COVID babies, comparing breastfeeding rates and trends against infants born during the pandemic. The study found that there were decreases in breastfeeding across all demographic groups studied. Hospital staffing and access to breastfeeding training and other healthcare due to pandemic restrictions were potential causes of the decreased breastfeeding.

"Although a task force was implemented in our newborn nursery immediately after this study to return breastfeeding rates back to normal

for our communities, many [mothers](#) and newborns missed the opportunity to benefit from the effects of [breastfeeding](#) during the pandemic," Dr. Yeh said.

More information: The Effect of SARS-CoV-2 on the Rates of Breastfeeding in the Newborn Nursery, 2022 American Academy of Pediatrics National Conference & Exhibition

Provided by American Academy of Pediatrics

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