

# Promoting and protecting human milk and breastfeeding during COVID-19

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Diane Spatz, PhD, RN-BC, FAAN, Professor of Perinatal Nursing and Helen M. Shearer Term Professor of Nutrition at Penn Nursing. Credit: University of Pennsylvania

With stressors mounting daily on the health care system due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a de-prioritization of the childbearing family has

been noted. Their care has changed, resulting in mothers forced to go through labor and birth without their partners, parents barred from NICU visitation, and discharge of mothers and newborns early without enough expert lactation care. There is great concern that these changes in childbearing families' care may become permanent—to the detriment of the health of both mother and child.

In an article in the journal *Frontiers in Pediatrics*, an international group of medical professionals led by a University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing (Penn Nursing) researcher present global findings that illustrate concern. They explain how, during the pandemic, birth and breastfeeding experiences of families have not been prioritized and care has changed in ways that may negatively impact birth outcomes and the establishment of breastfeeding. They also explain the importance of changing these prenatal and post-birth practice paradigms to ensure that all families in need receive equal access to evidence-based lactation education, care and technical assistance.

"We must use the pandemic to underscore the importance of human milk and breastfeeding as lifesaving medical interventions," says Diane Spatz, Ph.D., RN-BC, FAAN, Professor of Perinatal Nursing and Helen M. Shearer Term Professor of Nutrition at Penn Nursing. "This is an opportunity for health care professionals to undertake a call to action to protect and prioritize human milk and breastfeeding."

**More information:** Diane L. Spatz et al. Promoting and Protecting Human Milk and Breastfeeding in a COVID-19 World, *Frontiers in Pediatrics* (2021). [DOI: 10.3389/fped.2020.633700](https://doi.org/10.3389/fped.2020.633700)

Provided by University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing

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