

Breastfeeding and the H1N1 Flu Virus

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With the advent of the flu season, many people are concerned about the H1N1 flu virus and its effect on breastfeeding mothers and babies. With good information and common sense, everyone will be able to weather the flu season with the least amount of difficulty.

According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), women are encouraged to "initiate breastfeeding early and feed frequently" before either the mother or baby become ill to help avoid a serious infection in the baby. Breastfeeding ensures that the baby receives breastmilk with the mother's disease fighting antibodies at each feeding and can dramatically reduce the severity of the disease, thus avoiding hospitalization for severe respiratory illness.

Consistently practicing basic hygiene techniques protects the mother and baby from the spread of germs and disease. Everyone should begin by washing hands thoroughly with soap and water before and after exposure to someone who is sick. Coughing into the crook of the arm will keep the virus from spreading to other people. Additionally, it is important to wash any items that have been in the baby's mouth. It is advisable for the child and mother to "avoid contact with anyone who may be ill" and "stay away from crowded areas".

If a mother becomes ill with the H1N1 virus, a healthy family member could care for the baby while the mom continues to feed the baby as she recuperates. The CDC states that the mother can safely take an antiviral medication while breastfeeding.

With thought and preparation breastfeeding mothers can be confident that they and their babies should be able to survive the flu season.

Breastfeeding can continue uninterrupted through a flu infection because...it is normal.

CCE offers breastfeeding support to their participants. For more information please call 315-331-8415.