

Guidance for Virginia Department of Health Local Health Departments

June 8, 2022

How to help Patients or Participants who wish to Provide Human Milk

Breastfeeding is the optimal feeding method and nutritional standard for infants and young children. Human breast milk is not only the ideal food for infants, but it is the only food that infants need for the first six months of life. Breastfeeding is encouraged by the Virginia Department of Health, the World Health Organization, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the American Academy of Pediatrics. Breastfeeding remains the best infant feeding option in a natural disaster situation including family displacement, weather emergencies, and supply chain issues, like the one being experienced now. Human milk helps protect babies from diseases such as diarrhea and respiratory infections and provides the calories and nutrients babies need. A recent study shows that Mothers who received the COVID-19 mRNA vaccine can transfer protective antibodies to their breastfeeding babies.¹

- VDH encourages all expecting families to plan on breastfeeding.
- If patient is partially breastfeeding, milk production can quickly increase by breastfeeding more, with massage and hand expression, or pumping.
- If the infant is dependent on formula, it is possible for the birth parent to establish lactation through a process called relactation.

Relactation - the process of getting milk started again, can happen days, weeks, even months after milk has “dried up”. The younger the baby, the easier it is to reestablish milk production. Relactation is an established strategy to alleviate infant feeding risks in an emergency. This document is intended to help VDH staff to educate parents and caregivers of infants under one year of age on how to provide human milk. What follows is a list of best practices to build or establish milk production and additional resources to share with parents. The infant feeding crisis is a source of stress and anxiety for many parents. Postpartum Support Virginia educates families, healthcare providers and communities about Perinatal Mood & Anxiety Disorders. More information: [Postpartum Support Virginia](#).

- 1) If you are partially breastfeeding, offer feedings more often to increase milk production (8-12 feedings, hand expression, or pumping sessions) every 24 hours.
- 2) If the infant is dependent on formula, consider relactation. Relactation is the process by which a parent reestablishes lactation after having stopped for some time (weeks or even months). More information: [CDC Guidance Supporting Families with Relactation](#).
- 3) Adoptive parents can establish lactation and provide human milk.²

¹ Full Story: [ScienceDaily](#)

² [Journal of Human Lactation Volume: 38 issue: 2](#), page(s): 252-261

- 4) Seek skilled lactation support if wishing to establish or build milk production. (see resources below)
- 5) Check with baby's physician or healthcare provider with any questions, especially if the infant is on a restricted diet or has any medical conditions.
- 6) Seek peer breastfeeding support through WIC, social media support groups, or with mother to mother support groups like [Breastfeeding USA](#), [La Leche League](#), or [ROSE](#).
- 7) You may contact the local health department or WIC office for local referrals. Go to [Local Health Districts](#) and click on the map that contains your location.
- 8) Parents wishing to initiate or increase milk production should be referred to skilled lactation care, there are several breastfeeding medicine clinics in Virginia.

[Children's Hospital of Richmond Lactation Clinic](#): 804-828-CHOR (2467)

[Children's Hospital of the King's Daughters Breastfeeding Medicine](#): 757-668-6984

[Inova Breastfeeding Medicine](#): 571-419-5640

[University of Virginia Breastfeeding Medicine Clinic](#): 434-924-0000

Specially trained lactation professionals with the International Board Certified Lactation Consultant credential can be located in the directories listed below in resources.

- 9) Informal breast milk sharing carries potential risks. Please refer to the [Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine's 2017 Position Statement on Informal Breast Milk Sharing for the Term Healthy Infant](#).
- 10) Human milk may be a suitable alternative for families who feed certain specialty formulas for metabolic disorders. Pasteurized Human Donor Milk (PHDM) may be obtained from a milk bank with a prescription from the patient's healthcare provider. More information about milk banks can be found at [Human Milk Banking Association of North America](#) (HMBANA). Some insurance plans cover the cost of PHDM and Abbott Nutrition may also help cover the cost temporarily during the supply disruption.

REMEMBER: Talk to baby's healthcare provider with any questions, relactation is possible and encouraged for parents who desire to provide human milk.

RESOURCES:

[Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine Statement on shortage of breastmilk substitutes](#)

[AAP Infant Feeding in Disasters and Emergencies](#)

[CDC Breastfeeding Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#)

[CDC Guidance Supporting Families with Relactation](#)

[Find A Lactation Consultant](#) (may have a wider variety of native language speakers)

[HHS Infant Feeding During Disasters](#)

[Maximizing Breast Milk and Supporting Relactation Michigan WIC](#)

[The King's Daughters Milk Bank at CHKD](#)

[USLCA's Find An IBCLC® Directory](#)

[Virginia Breastfeeding Coalition](#)

[Virginia Department of Health Breastfeeding Resources](#)