



# *La Leche League of Ireland*

## *Breastfeeding Help & Information*

### **Press Release April 2020**

#### **“Mothers need support now more than ever!”**

As a result of COVID-19, many new parents find themselves seeking extra support and information to establish breastfeeding and overcome difficulties. With over 60 years of breastfeeding experience, La Leche League (LLL) encourages all families to recognise the importance of breastfeeding in providing immunological protection to the breastfed child.

All in-person LLL meetings and home visits are currently suspended, but Leaders remain available to mothers by phone and Messenger, with many groups facilitating virtual meetings. Breastfeeding mothers and pregnant women can access accurate breastfeeding information and support during this difficult time of social distancing. “I was feeling quite anxious and alone...the Zoom meeting meant I was able to connect. It’s a great lifeline, knowing that the same emotional support is there during these uncertain times,” said Lynn, LLL Trinity group member.

Most often, babies who are being nursed remain healthy even when their parents or other family members fall ill with an infectious illness. There is a growing body of research showing babies benefit from multiple and diverse immunological proteins, including antibodies, provided in human milk, particularly through direct breastfeeding. “Breastmilk contains numerous live components including immunoglobulins, antiviral factors... all of which help destroy invading pathogens and boost the baby’s own immune system” (UNICEF). Anyone who becomes infected shortly before giving birth and then begins breastfeeding, and those who become infected while breastfeeding, will produce specific secretory IgA antibodies and many other critical immune factors in their milk. These protect and enhance their infants’ own immune responses. At this time, these immunologic factors will aid their infants’ bodies to respond more effectively to exposure and infection.

If a mother contracts COVID-19, she is advised to wash her hands before breastfeeding and wear a mask. It is important not to interrupt direct breastfeeding. The baby has already been exposed to the virus by the mother and/or family and will benefit most from continued direct breastfeeding. Disruption of breastfeeding may lead to several issues, most notably an increased risk of the infant becoming ill as a result of the lack of immune support from direct breastfeeding .

If a mother requires hospitalisation, the baby should be allowed to continue breastfeeding if at all possible. If an interruption of breastfeeding is deemed medically necessary, hand expressing or pumping breastmilk is encouraged.

La Leche League groups are listed on [www.lalecheleagueireland.com](http://www.lalecheleagueireland.com).  
[www.facebook.com/lalecheleagueireland](https://www.facebook.com/lalecheleagueireland) Instagram @lalecheleagueofireland,  
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