

Iowa WIC Program Guidance for Breastfeeding during COVID-19

Breastfeeding Recommendations during COVID-19

Local WIC agency staff will continue to support the benefits of breastfeeding during the COVID-19 pandemic. Breast milk provides protection against many illnesses and is the best source of nutrition for most infants. Breastfeeding families should work together with their healthcare providers to decide how to safely begin or continue to breastfeed their infant should they become sick with COVID-19. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends the following:

- If a breastfeeding mother is sick and chooses to put baby to breast she should take precautions such as:
 - Washing hands thoroughly before holding her infant, and
 - Wearing a facemask (if available) while feeding her infant.
- If a breastfeeding mother is sick and chooses to express breastmilk:
 - A dedicated breast pump should be provided.
 - She should wear a cloth face covering during expression and proper hand washing should be followed before touching any pump or bottle parts.
 - If possible, have someone who is feeling well feed the expressed breast milk to the infant.

Normal Breast Pump Issuance Policy

Normally, state WIC policy instructs local agencies to issue a hospital-grade loaner or rental breast pump to breastfeeding women for the first 1 to 2 months after an infant is born to help build a mom's milk supply and ensure breastfeeding gets off to a good start. After the trial period, staff assess if a mother is a good candidate to receive a personal electric breast pump if breastfeeding is going well, she is still pumping, and she desires to have a personal breast pump.

Updated Breast Pump Guidance during the Pandemic

The Iowa WIC Program will continue to issue breast pumps to participants in need during the COVID-19 crisis. To decrease the likelihood of disease spread and following the guidance provided by health officials to reduce unnecessary contact, **personal electric breast pumps may be issued to breastfeeding women in lieu of the usual trial period of a hospital-grade breast pump if any agency determines it appropriate.**

In some circumstances, breastfeeding mothers benefit more from a hospital-grade breast pump instead of a personal electric breast pump. Examples of situations where a hospital-grade pump would be beneficial include for breastfeeding mothers with babies born prematurely, those with

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multiples, or in situations where milk supply is a concern. It is recommended to work with local hospitals to assist mothers in obtaining a loaner breast pump if mother or infant are hospitalized.

Breast Pump Issuance

If a mother needs either a personal electric breast pump or a hospital-grade electric breast pump, she will complete her appointment (if necessary) and then either:

- A. Receive her breast pump at the local WIC clinic if appointments are being completed in-person,
- B. Pick up her breast pump by meeting the local WIC staff at a predetermined location if appointments are being completed remotely (i.e. the local agency clinic or another location depending on where the participant is located), or
- C. Pick up her rental breast pump from a durable medical equipment provider or pharmacy that contracts with the local WIC agency.

Breast Pump Returns

As clinic locations start to reopen, agencies should start to request that participants who have held onto agency-owned hospital-grade breast pumps during the pandemic return them. Agencies will be able to utilize either the Focus Breastfeeding Equipment Due or their own internal inventory documentation to determine which breast pumps need to be returned. Per normal policy (240.85), formula should not be denied to WIC participants who are in need and cannot return their loaner or rental breast pump due to the temporary situation.

Cleaning Loaner Breast Pumps during the Pandemic

Upon return, agency-owned hospital-grade breast pumps should be bagged and stored at the agency for at least 4 days before cleaning with an appropriate disinfectant. Below is the link to the EPA Disinfectant List determined appropriate for use against COVID-19 :

<https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>

If an agency is concerned about not being able to obtain the appropriate cleaner to disinfect, they should leave the breast pump in the bag and discuss the concerns with the State Breastfeeding Coordinator.

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Resources for Breastfeeding During COVID-19

CDC Guidelines:

- [Breastfeeding guidance during COVID-19](#)
- [How to Keep Your Breast Pump Kit Clean](#)

United States Breastfeeding Committee (USBC):

- [COVID-19 resources page](#)

Additional Articles:

- [Journal of Human Lactation: Safe Handling of Containers of Expressed Human Milk in all Settings During the SARS-CoV-2 \(COVID-19\) Pandemic](#)
- [Journal of Human Lactation: COVID19 and Breastfeeding: Not That Simple](#)
- [Breastfeeding and Coronavirus Disease-2019. Ad interim indications of the Italian Society of Neonatology endorsed by the Union of European Neonatal & Perinatal Societies.](#)