

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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CONTACT

Jim Smith, Executive Director
International Lactation Consultant Association
919-861-5577
jim@ilca.org

ILCA Press Room - www.ilca.org

BREASTFEEDING SHOULD CONTINUE DURING SWINE FLU OUTBREAK

As global preparations for swine flu heighten, the International Lactation Consultant Association (ILCA) urges mothers, health care workers, and the community at large to promote, support, and encourage breastfeeding, which provides infants with human antibodies that can help fight illness and disease.

ILCA supports the recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), “Interim Guidance – Pregnant Women and Swine Influenza: Considerations for Clinicians,” which advises breastfeeding mothers to continue breastfeeding while taking antiviral medications, when indicated. The CDC guidance, available at http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/clinician_pregnant.htm, recommends that breastfeeding mothers who become ill with the flu take measures to minimize exposure to the infant, including hand washing and possibly covering the mother’s mouth/nose with a mask. The CDC further reports that although the risk of transmitting swine influenza from mother to baby through breastfeeding is unknown, reports of transmission of seasonal flu are rare.

According to Angela Smith, president of ILCA, many medical experts believe that by the time symptoms of the flu have been manifested in the mother, her baby has already been exposed. Providing human antibodies and other protective factors through breastfeeding helps protect the baby. In addition, formula feeding is proven to increase the risk of diarrhea in infants.

While there is currently no specific vaccine for swine influenza, the existing flu vaccines for seasonal flu are safe and recommended for breastfeeding mothers.

“We urge all health care providers and families to promote, protect, and support breastfeeding during this and other times of emergency,” says Smith. “New mothers need accurate information and support to continue providing their infants with the best protection of all: mother’s milk.”

International Board Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLCs) are credentialed health care professionals who focus on assisting mothers with initiating and continuing breastfeeding. To help a mother access an IBCLC in her community, check the “Find a Lactation Consultant Directory” at the ILCA website at www.ilca.org, or contact the ILCA office at info@ilca.org, or 919-861-5577.