

Effect of COVID-19 Infection Outbreak on Breastfeeding Practice

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Abstract

Background: During the COVID-19 outbreak, how to practice breastfeeding was a frustrating issue for lactating mothers. **Objectives:** To study breastfeeding practices before and during the outbreak and breastfeeding problems during the outbreak. **Methods:** This was a cross-sectional, online questionnaire-based survey in lactating mothers whose infants aged 1-6 months and stayed in Thailand. **Results:** During the study period May 2020 to May 2021, 139 participants were recruited. One-third of mothers lived in Bangkok. Mean maternal age was 32.3 ± 5.2 years. Eighty-two percent of mothers were exclusively breastmilk feeding. Practices that be changed from 'doing nothing before the outbreak' to 'performed at least 1 action during the outbreak' were taking shower, washing hands or cleaning breast before breastfeeding (p -value $< .001$) and before breast pumping (p -value = $.001$); from 'not wearing' to 'wearing' a face mask during breastfeeding (p -value = $< .001$). If the mothers were person under investigation or were infected with SARS-CoV2, 35% and 47% of them, respectively, chose mother-infant separation and discarded breast milk. Sixty-six percent of mothers had breastfeeding problems but were afraid to go to hospital while 33% sought help but breastfeeding clinics were closed. Seventeen percent decided to start infant formula supplementation due to unsolved breastfeeding problems. **Conclusion:** The mothers paid more attention to cleanliness when breastfeeding or breast pumping during the outbreak. The outbreak might cause unnecessary weaning due to unsolved breastfeeding problem. Education about safe use of breastmilk and strategies to enhance access to breastfeeding consultation for lactating mothers during the outbreak should be implemented.