



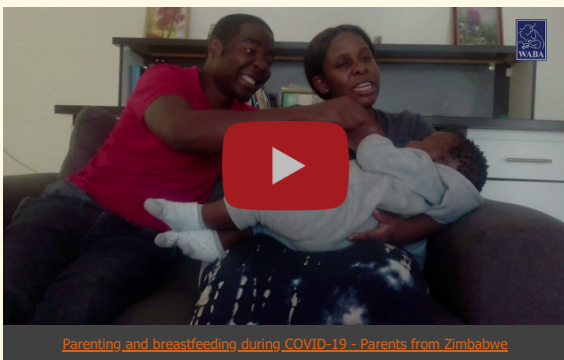
# WORLD ALLIANCE FOR BREASTFEEDING ACTION

## WABA Global Day of Parents 2020 Statement

### What do parents need for breastfeeding during COVID-19?

The [UN Global Day of Parents](#) honours parents throughout the world for their selfless commitment to children and their lifelong sacrifice towards nurturing this relationship. Parents from [Guatemala](#), [Malaysia](#), [Sweden](#) and [Zimbabwe](#) are sharing their perspectives on parenting and breastfeeding during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their stories showcase some of the issues, commonalities, differences and need for support.

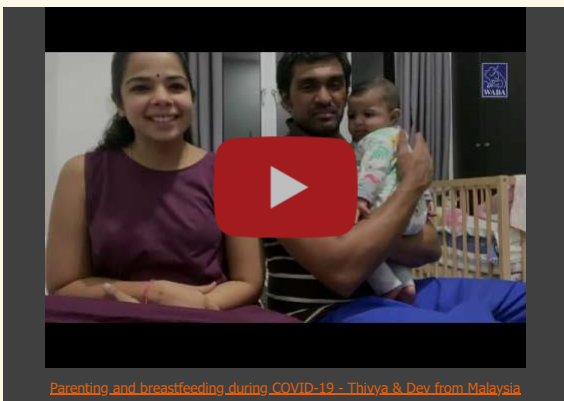
A child is brought to the world by its parents who then dedicate their lives to nurturing the child to provide the best start in its life. Parents have the primary responsibility to provide within their means, safe conditions and good nutrition for the optimal development of their child. Every child has the right to good nutrition, and breastmilk is the first food. Breastfeeding provides the best chance for a child to grow healthy in the short- and long-term. Breastfeeding is also sustainable, ecological, and good for planetary health. Despite international recommendations, only about 40% of infants are exclusively breastfed for the first six months and 45% continue breastfeeding up to 24 months globally. There are many barriers to breastfeeding including lack of support for parents from healthcare systems, workplaces and society. The situation is [worsened by the industry that is taking advantage of the situation to market breastmilk substitutes](#). There is no evidence so far that the virus is transmitted through breastfeeding and [WHO and other international organisations](#) recommend continued breastfeeding during the COVID-19 pandemic.



[Parenting and breastfeeding during COVID-19 - Parents from Zimbabwe](#)

The COVID-19 pandemic is threatening the well being, livelihoods, and economic conditions of millions of families worldwide. Many parents are [facing unemployment and losing their source of income in these challenging times](#). On the other hand, the work demand for essential workers has increased tremendously whilst also facing a heightened risk of exposure to the virus. Most nations around the world have introduced preventive measures such as physical distancing, lockdown and restriction on border crossing that lead to the separation of some parents from their children and families. However, the stay at home orders have also benefited many parents who are able to work from home. They are able to spend more time with their children and breastfeed. This is especially appreciated by parents of newborns when breastfeeding is becoming established. Breastfeeding is all the more important during COVID-19 as it helps to build the child's immune system.

Breastfeeding parents are utilising their alone time to bond with their child and as a family. Some are reporting better breastfeeding experiences. Staying at home has allowed parents adequate space and time to breastfeed successfully. They may be able to better read their child's cues and feed on demand. Unfortunately, the proper and timely support they need has taken a toll. Mothers are reportedly discharged early from hospitals upon delivery due to lack of space and adequate staffing. Healthcare services, such as counselling and skilled lactation support, are not always readily available everywhere. Physical distancing measures have restricted access to face-to-face breastfeeding support and parents are increasingly turning to online resources and social media to get the information and support they need.



[Parenting and breastfeeding during COVID-19 - Thivya & Dev from Malaysia](#)

The COVID-19 pandemic coupled with the enormous increase in parenting responsibilities have affected parents' mental health. On the other hand, parents are finding innovative strategies to keep themselves and their children healthy. The first few weeks are usually the most challenging but some parents have worked out how to adapt to the new normal. For parents who are able to work from home, they could be juggling work, child care, and

additionally homeschooling. Parents who are essential workers face an even bigger challenge. Employers can support working parents in various ways, such as offering time off work, flexible working hours and telecommuting. Governments should provide [legislation and policies](#) to protect these working parents by adopting [gender-equitable parental social protection](#).



Parents should have access to support from all levels of society to enable a successful breastfeeding journey. Parents can work as a team to share the care and domestic work and plan their strategies. Working as a team, setting breastfeeding goals and overcoming difficulties together are especially important for breastfeeding success. The healthcare system, workplace and society can support the breastfeeding team by creating an enabling environment across the 1000 days. The first 1000 days from pregnancy until the child's second birthday is a window of opportunity to create a [warm chain of support for breastfeeding](#). Additional breastfeeding support should be readily available for vulnerable families for example during emergencies, special needs situations or other medical conditions affecting breastfeeding.

All parents have the right to be supported by society to breastfeed optimally. [World Breastfeeding Week 2020](#) provides an important opportunity for society to galvanise actions in support of breastfeeding for a healthier planet. Although the parents' testimonials showcase their challenges and resilience in providing the best start for their child, many parents across the world do not have adequate support. There is still much more we can do to empower parents to breastfeed more optimally.



This Global Day of Parents, WABA would like to congratulate all parents and call upon all of society to:

- Ensure that health systems provide unbiased, consistent breastfeeding information and support throughout the 1000 days.
- Galvanise community action to provide breastfeeding protection and support close to parents.
- Ensure that all workplaces protect and support working parents to achieve their breastfeeding goals.
- Advocate to governments to improve parental social protection policies and laws that support optimal breastfeeding.

For more information, contact:

Thinagan, [thina@waba.org.my](mailto:thina@waba.org.my)



World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) is a global network of individuals and organisations dedicated to the protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding worldwide based on the Innocenti Declarations, the Ten Links for Nurturing the Future and the WHO/UNICEF Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding. WABA is in consultative status with UNICEF and an NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC). WABA coordinates the annual World Breastfeeding Week campaigns.

[www.waba.org.my](http://www.waba.org.my)

