



PHILIPPINE SOCIETY OF NEWBORN MEDICINE

STATEMENT ON THE USE OF FACE SHIELD FOR NEWBORNS DURING THE SARS-COVID-2 PANDEMIC

April 20, 2020

COVID-19 (Sars-Cov-2) remains an invisible threat to people worldwide regardless of age. Protection of the most vulnerable - the newborn - is utmost in our care. Because of their immature immune system, the neonates are highly susceptible to acquire SARS-CoV-2 after birth.

At present, face shields/covering or homemade masks are being used by parents in their desire to protect their newly born babies from the deadly virus.

It is in this regard that the Philippine Society of Newborn Medicine (PSNbm) is issuing a statement of non-conformity on the use of face shield for the newborn.

PSNbm does not recommend and prohibits the use of ANY FORM OF FACIAL PROTECTIVE COVERING for the newborn population because of the high risk of suffocation, leading to lack of oxygen delivery and carbon dioxide retention and, when displaced, causing strangulation and sudden infant death syndrome. Likewise, the mother will find removing and putting off the face shield cumbersome when breastfeeding, resulting to decreased frequency of feeding.

PSNbm supports the statements of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and American Academy of Pediatrics which state that “face coverings should not be placed on young children under age two, anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance.” The WHO guideline does not mention the use of face shields for newborns during this critical period.

Reasons Why Newborns Should NOT wear FACE SHIELDS/FACE COVERING:

1. Respiratory compromise:

- Airways of the newborns are smaller, so breathing through a face shield is even harder on them.
- Using a mask on a baby may increase the risk of suffocation and strangulation.
- If they have a hard time breathing, newborns are unable to take the mask off themselves and could suffocate.

2. Restriction of breastfeeding:

- Removing and putting on the face shield before and after breastfeeding/cup feeding may be cumbersome for the mother

How To Protect The Newborn During COVID-19 Pandemic:

- Limit exposure of the newborn by avoiding any unnecessary public contact.
- If going out is essential, cover the baby carrier/seater (NOT THE NEWBORN) with a blanket, which helps protect the baby, but still gives them the ability to breathe comfortably. Do not leave the blanket on the carrier in the car or at any time when the newborn and carrier are not in direct view.
- Keep hands clean **before** every breastfeeding. Frequent hand washing with soap and water for 20 seconds is optimal, but hand sanitizer, with at least 60% alcohol is the next best substitute.
- Clean frequently-touched surfaces such as doorknobs, handles, light switches and electronics often.
- Remember to always wash the hands (of the caregiver and any sibling) before touching the baby
- Newborns should be placed supine (on their back) in an empty crib in a non-smoking home.
- Mothers or caregivers should Instead wear a face mask with or without a face shield or use a cloth sling when holding and/or breastfeeding the newborn.

References:

1. **American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)**. Masks and Children during Covid-19. 9 April 2020 (Retrieved from <https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/masks-and-children-during-covid-19/> 19 April 2020.)
2. **Center for Disease Control (CDC)**. Coronavirus 2019: Pregnancy and Breastfeeding. 13 April 2020. (Retrieved from https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fprepare%2Fprevention.html 19 April 2020)
3. **World Health Organization (WHO)**. Modes of transmission of virus causing COVID-19: implications for IPC precaution recommendations. Scientific brief. 29 March 2020. (Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/news-room/commentaries/detail/modes-of-transmission-of-virus-causing-covid-19-implications-for-ipc-precaution-recommendations> 19 April 2020)