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## Breastfeeding, Chestfeeding and HIV: Supporting Informed Choices

Submitted on Jan 25, 2024

Image

**Breast/chestfeeding** is considered the healthiest infant-feeding option for the general population. The Well Project is committed to ensuring that women and other parents living with HIV have access to the information, support, and tools necessary to make **informed** infant-feeding decisions.

We affirm the **autonomy** of women and parents living with HIV; their **fundamental right** to make informed, uncoerced infant-feeding choices; and the need to trust that they will make the best decisions for themselves and their families when equipped with **information, resources, and support**.

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## The Issue

Breastfeeding while taking HIV drugs is the standard of care for women and other parents living with HIV in resource-limited areas of the world. It has been shown to increase survival and well-being of their babies, and the risk of HIV transmission with this method is extremely low. However, in high-resource settings like the United States and Canada, general HIV and public health guidelines have historically discouraged breastfeeding among women living with HIV.

A significant change occurred in early 2023 when the [US Perinatal HIV Clinical Guidelines](#) – which inform healthcare providers in their engagements specifically related to pregnancy, infant care, and HIV – were rigorously updated to reflect current knowledge about HIV transmission through breast milk; discuss benefits of breast/chestfeeding; and encourage informed, shared infant-feeding decision-making for women and other birthing parents living with HIV.

### [Read more about changes to the guidelines and The Well Project's involvement](#)

Over the past several years, The Well Project has created and curated many articles, events, and other resources to provide access to a range of information, based on research findings and expert experience, that can support parents living with HIV in their infant-feeding decision making. Below is a list of our resources on this topic, which we will continue to add to as they are developed. We recognize and are responding to the need for programming to advance research, policy, and educational resources for women and other parents living with HIV and the providers, professionals, and others who care for them.

### [Browse this collection of materials curated for health professionals](#)

Image



[\*\*BEEBAH \(Building Equity, Ethics, and Education on Breastfeeding and HIV\)\*\*](#) is a comprehensive, multi-tiered three-year project expanding upon The Well Project's efforts to increase knowledge and access to information around breast/chestfeeding and HIV.

[\*\*LEARN MORE & CHECK PAGE OFTEN FOR BEEBAH UPDATES!\*\*](#)

## Breaking News

- [The Well Project Applauds Updates to Perinatal HIV Clinical Guidelines around Breast/Chestfeeding for Women and Other Birthing Parents Living with HIV](#) (January 31, 2023)

## Articles and Fact Sheets

- [The Well Project at the 2023 Motown Experience: Birth & Breastfeeding Conference](#) (perspective piece)
- *NEWLY UPDATED!* [HIV Treatment Guidelines for Pregnant People and Their Infants](#) (fact sheet)
- [Can I Breastfeed While Living With HIV?](#) (fact sheet)
- [Overview of Infant Feeding Options for Parents Living with HIV](#) (fact sheet)

## Conference Posters and Discussions

- [Listening to Women: Supporting Informed Decision-Making on Infant Feeding and HIV](#) (session

poster at the International Workshop on HIV & Women 2023)

- [Breastfeeding & HIV in the US and Canada: Centering Women's Lived Experiences Into the Clinical, Research and Policy Discussion](#) (virtual conference presentation)
- [We need to talk about breastfeeding and HIV](#) (panel discussion led by ViiV Healthcare and featuring Ci Ci Covin, Program Coordinator for The Well Project)
- [Breastfeeding and HIV in the Era of U=U: Highlights from a Growing Discussion](#) (conference workshop summary)
- [Conversations at Adherence 2019: Advancing Discussions of Infant Feeding Choices in the U=U Era](#) (perspectives article)
- [The Well Project at Adherence 2019](#) (session poster)

Image



The [\*\*\*Expert Consensus Statement on Breastfeeding and HIV in the United States and Canada\*\*\*](#) affirms the agency of women and parents living with HIV – and the urgency of including them at all levels in HIV research, education, and policy.

[\*\*READ MORE & SIGN ON TODAY!\*\*](#)

## Reports and Resources

- [BEEBAH Resource Group- a Home For Breast/Chestfeeding Parents Living with HIV](#) (private Facebook group)
- [Resources to Talk to Your Provider about Breastfeeding and HIV](#) (discussion guide)
- [Expert Consensus Statement on Breastfeeding and HIV in the United States and Canada](#) (statement with background and sign-on form)
- [Women and HIV Infant-Feeding Resources Compiled by The Well Project](#)
- [List of US-Based Providers who Support Informed Infant Feeding Choices for Parents with HIV](#) (fill out the form in this article if you believe your practice/organization belongs on this list)

- [WRI 2018 - Undetectable=Untransmittable: Contextualizing a Campaign in the Lives of Women Living with and Vulnerable to HIV](#) (annual research meeting report)

Interested in engaging in conversation or sharing insights or updates related to HIV and infant feeding (including breast/chestfeeding)? Email [oford@thewellproject.org](mailto:oford@thewellproject.org) to be added to the growing HIV and Infant Feeding listserv!

## Breast/Chestfeeding Infographics

Click the images below to save and share as jpeg images

**Did you know?**

If a woman living with HIV has a sustained **UNDETECTABLE VIRAL LOAD**, the chance of transmitting HIV through breastfeeding **IS LESS THAN 1%**.

In the US and other high-resource countries, **GUIDELINES RECOMMEND PROVIDERS SUPPORT A PARENT'S DECISION TO BREASTFEED.**

Source: HIV Perinatal HIV Treatment Guidelines

BUILDING EQUITY, ETHICS, AND EDUCATION ON BREASTFEEDING AND HIV (BEEBAH)


 thewellproject [www.thewellproject.org](http://www.thewellproject.org)

The infographic is a vertical rectangle with a white background and a purple border. At the top left is a circular logo with a yellow background and a purple border, featuring a silhouette of a woman breastfeeding a child, with the word 'BEEBAH' written below it. To the right of this logo is the text 'Did you know?' in a large, bold, purple font. Below this, there are two purple rectangular boxes. The first box contains white text stating that if a woman with HIV has a sustained undetectable viral load, the chance of transmitting HIV through breastfeeding is less than 1%. To the right of this text is a small circular icon containing two test tubes. The second box contains white text stating that in the US and other high-resource countries, guidelines recommend providers support a parent's decision to breastfeed. Below this text is a small circular icon containing a silhouette of a woman breastfeeding a child. At the bottom of the infographic, there is a small line of text: 'BUILDING EQUITY, ETHICS, AND EDUCATION ON BREASTFEEDING AND HIV (BEEBAH)'. At the very bottom, there is a purple bar containing the 'thewellproject' logo (a stylized 't' with four colored dots) and the website address 'www.thewellproject.org'.

## How can parents living with HIV help keep their babies HIV-negative while breast/chestfeeding?



BUILDING EQUITY, ETHICS, AND EDUCATION ON BREASTFEEDING AND HIV (BEEBAH)

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[www.thewellproject.org](http://www.thewellproject.org)


## When a parent living with HIV chooses to breast/chestfeed, support is fundamental!



***"All I wanted to do was feed my baby. I was not seeking approval, I just needed support."***

*— Breastfeeding mother living with HIV*

BUILDING EQUITY, ETHICS, AND EDUCATION ON BREASTFEEDING AND HIV (BEEBAH)

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[www.thewellproject.org](http://www.thewellproject.org)

## Personal Stories

- [Spotlight on Heather O'Connor: My Journey with Breastfeeding and HIV](#)
- [Liquid Gold](#) (Part 1)
- [Gold-ish Liquid](#) (Part 2)
- [Ashley's Story - An Informed Journey Toward Breastfeeding](#)




## Videos, Podcasts, and Presentations

- [It's Time to Embrace Breastfeeding/Chestfeeding for US People With HIV](#) (episode of The Future of HIV Care, a monthly podcast from TheBodyPro)
- [Ciarra "Ci Ci" Covin on HIV Stigma: People Living with HIV Are Still Human, with the Same Desires](#) (episode of the podcast Everybody Hates Me: Let's Talk About Stigma)
- [Updates to the Perinatal HIV Clinical Guidelines!](#) (expert discussion featuring Ciarra "Ci Ci" Covin and Lealah Pollock, MD, MS, of University of California, San Francisco)
- Perinatal HIV Roundtables (annual panel discussions, copresented in 2022 and 2023 by The Well Project and the National Perinatal HIV Hotline)
  - [2023 - The HIV and Infant Feeding Guidelines at Six Months: Perspectives from National Leaders](#)
  - [2022 - Updates in Breast/Chestfeeding: Parent Perspectives and Evolving Practice](#)
- [Breastfeeding, HIV, and Criminalization: Legal Considerations from a US Attorney](#) (expert conversation featuring Ciarra "Ci Ci" Covin and longtime attorney Catherine Hanssens of The Center for HIV Law and Policy)
- [Breast/Chestfeeding and HIV in the US: A Listening Session with National Advocates](#) (webinar in honor of National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day featuring women leaders from US-based organizations providing advocacy updates related to infant feeding and HIV)
- [The Big Picture: Health Implications and Bioethical Considerations of Breastfeeding and HIV](#) (expert conversation featuring Ciarra "Ci Ci" Covin and Marielle Gross, MD, MBE, of the university of Pittsburgh and Johns Hopkins)
- [Breastfeeding and HIV: Viewpoints from an Adult and Pediatric Provider](#) (expert conversation featuring Ciarra "Ci Ci" Covin and Allison Agwu, MD, of Johns Hopkins) (see video below)
- [Breastfeeding and HIV in the U=U Era: Advancing Conversation and Community Awareness](#) (webinar discussion on the intersection of HIV, infant feeding, and criminalization)
- [A Girl Like Me LIVE Episode 6: Breastfeeding and HIV with Ciarra "Ci Ci" Covin and Heather O'Connor](#)
- [Breastfeeding and HIV: What We Know and Considerations for Informed Choices](#) (December 2018 webinar)

## Order Materials

["Get the Facts on Breast/Chestfeeding and HIV" Pamphlet](#): Get key facts about breast/chestfeeding and HIV at your fingertips! From snapshots of the latest research and current guidelines to a direct link for support in talking with providers about infant feeding, this pocket-sized folding pamphlet packs vital information into an attractive, readable format. The pamphlet is a helpful resource to share at conferences and community events, in clinic waiting rooms – anywhere women and other potential parents living with HIV are served.


Image



## GET THE FACTS

### Breast/Chestfeeding and HIV

[www.thewellproject.org](http://www.thewellproject.org)



## Did you know?

If a woman living with HIV has a sustained **UNDETECTABLE VIRAL LOAD**, the chance of transmitting HIV through breastfeeding is **LESS THAN 1%**.

In the US and other high-resource countries, **GUIDELINES RECOMMEND PROVIDERS SUPPORT A PARENT'S DECISION TO BREASTFEED.**

RESEARCH SOURCE: EMORY UNIVERSITY'S ASSOCIATION OF BREASTFEEDING AND HIV

### How can parents living with HIV help keep their babies HIV-negative while breast/chestfeeding?



- Using antiretroviral drugs
- Using condoms with birth control
- Abstaining from sex and sexual activity until fully recovered
- Ensuring partners receive and take antiretroviral drugs
- Monitoring at your doctor
- Support/Support Support
- Exclusive breast/chestfeeding up to 6 months

### When a parent living with HIV chooses to breast/chestfeed, support is fundamental!



- Partners
- Family members
- Peers
- Community health professionals
- Support Partners Co-Parents


**“All I wanted to do was feed my baby. I was not seeking approval, I just needed support.”**  
—Claudia Conde

**“Support from my infectious disease doctor and partner is what allowed me to be successful in breastfeeding both of my children.”**  
—Marquita D'Conceicao

**“As a woman born with HIV, I can tell you how vital it is to empower women living with HIV to feel free to have children and feed them as they see best.”**  
—Patricia Diaz

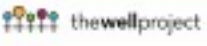
RESEARCH Building Equity, Ethics, and Education on Breastfeeding and HIV is supported by a grant from VIV Healthcare's Positive Action for Women Initiative

## Tools to help you talk to your provider



Scan the QR code to access talking points and other resources that can support conversations with your providers about your infant-feeding options.





[www.thewellproject.org](http://www.thewellproject.org)



## Visit The Well Project

to access evidence-based fact sheets, and other educational programming; community support; advocacy and leadership development; collaborative engagement; and science-focused research!

Join our dynamic community of women living with and vulnerable to HIV at:  
[www.thewellproject.org](http://www.thewellproject.org)

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Click the image above to save as a jpeg or share online; or [download a printable pdf of this resource](#)

**[FILL OUT THIS FORM TO HAVE FREE COPIES OF THIS PAMPHLET SHIPPED TO YOUR ORGANIZATION OR PRACTICE!](#)**

**En español**



- [Directrices de tratamiento del VIH para personas en estado de embarazo y sus bebés](#) (hoja informativa)
- [¿Puedo dar pecho mientras vivo con VIH?](#) (hoja informativa)
- [Información general sobre las opciones de alimentación infantil para padres viviendo con VIH](#) (hoja informativa)
- "Conozca los hechos sobre la lactancia materna/dar el pecho y el VIH" (folleto)

Image

**CONOZCA LOS HECHOS**  
La lactancia materna/dar el pecho y el VIH  
www.thewellproject.org

**¿Sabía que?**  
Si una mujer viviendo con VIH toma una CARGA VIRAL INDETECTABLE, reduce la posibilidad de transmitir el VIH a través de la lactancia ES DE MENOS DEL 1%.

En EE. UU. y en otros países de altos recursos, las directrices recomiendan que los proveedores apoyen la decisión de los padres de amamantar a sus hijos.

**¿Cómo pueden los padres que viven con VIH ayudar a mantener a sus bebés VIH negativos mientras los amamantan?**

- Tomar la medicación para el VIH según prescripción
- Practicar higiene personal con el agua del grifo
- Evitar cualquier cosa que pueda dañar la piel o la boca de los bebés
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**Cuando los padres que viven con VIH deciden la lactancia materna/dar el pecho, ¡el apoyo es fundamental!**

- Proveedores
- Compañeros
- Profesionales de la salud mental
- Apoyo en la familia
- Medicina de la familia
- Compañeros/compañeras

**Lo único que quería era alimentar a mi bebé. No buscaba aprobación, sólo necesitaba apoyo.**  
—Gloria, Costa Rica

**El apoyo de mi médico de enfermedades infecciosas y de mi pareja es lo que me permitió tener éxito en la lactancia de mis dos hijos.**  
—Heather O'Connor

**Como mujer que nació con VIH, puedo decirles lo vital que es empoderar a las mujeres viviendo con VIH para que se sientan libres de tener hijos y alimentarlos como mejor les parezca.**  
—Patricia Diaz

**Herramientas para ayudarle a hablar con su proveedor**  
Escanee el código QR para acceder a temas de conversación y otros recursos que pueden ayudarle en las conversaciones sobre sus opciones de alimentación infantil con sus proveedores.

**EL LENGUAJE IMPORTA:**  
En The Well Project utilizamos "lactancia materna" y "amamantar/dar el pecho". The Well Project se centra en las mujeres cis y trans que viven con VIH y son vulnerables a él, y nos enfocamos por ser inclusivos con las mujeres trans, las personas no binarias y todas las demás personas viviendo con VIH que desean explorar estas opciones.

**¡Visite The Well Project**  
para acceder a hojas informativas basadas en la evidencia y otros programas educativos: apoyo comunitario, abogacía y desarrollo de liderazgo, participación colaborativa e investigaciones centradas en la mujer.  
Únase a nuestra comunidad dinámica de mujeres viviendo con VIH y vulnerables a él en [www.thewellproject.org](http://www.thewellproject.org)

[www.thewellproject.org](http://www.thewellproject.org)

Haga clic en la imagen de arriba para guardarla como jpeg o compartirla en línea; o [descargue un pdf imprimible de este recurso](#)

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