Breastfeeding, Chestfeeding and HIV: Supporting Informed Choices

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**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.

**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, HIV and public health guidelines oppose breastfeeding among women living with HIV. These guidelines address neither the potential health benefits of breastfeeding, nor the potential health risks to parent and child of not breastfeeding. The information available can be confusing for those who may want to explore the option of breast/chestfeeding.

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, than 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.
BEEEBAH (Building Equity, Ethics, and Education on Breastfeeding and HIV) [2] 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 BEEEBAH UPDATES!** [2]

**Articles and Fact Sheets**

- [¿Puedo amamantar mientras vivo con VIH? Un resumen de opciones de alimentación infantil](https://www.thewellproject.org/factsheets/puedo-amamantar-mientras-vivo-con-ivh-un-resumen-de-opciones-de-alimentacion-infantil)
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[4] (hoja informativa)
- The Well Project at Adherence 2019 [7] (session poster)

The Expert Consensus Statement on Breastfeeding and HIV in the United States and Canada [8] 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! [8]

Reports and Resources

- Expert Consensus Statement on Breastfeeding and HIV in the United States and Canada [8] (statement with background and sign-on form)
- Women and HIV Infant-Feeding Resources Compiled by The Well Project [9]
- List of US-Based Providers who Support Informed Infant Feeding Choices for Parents with HIV [10] (fill out the form in this article if you believe your practice/organization belongs on this list)

Interested in engaging in conversation or sharing insights or updates related to HIV and infant
feeding (including breast/chestfeeding)? Email oford@thewellproject.org [12] 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%.

While US guidelines don’t recommend breastfeeding with HIV, they DO recommend PROVIDERS SUPPORT A PARENT'S DECISION TO BREASTFEED.

Source: HHS Prenatal HIV Treatment Guidelines
How can parents living with HIV help keep their babies HIV-negative while breast/chestfeeding?

- Taking HIV medications as prescribed
- Early planning with health care team
- Attending all health care appointments for parent and baby
- Preventative medication to baby after birth
- Maintaining an undetectable viral load
- Support, support, support!

BUILDING EQUITY, ETHICS, AND EDUCATION ON BREASTFEEDING AND HIV (BEEBAH)
When a parent living with HIV chooses to breast/chestfeed, support is fundamental!

“...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)

Personal Stories

- Spotlight on Heather O’Connor: My Journey with Breastfeeding and HIV [16]
- Liquid Gold [17] (Part 1)
- Gold-lish Liquid [18] (Part 2)

Videos and Presentations

- The Big Picture: Health Implications and Bioethical Considerations of Breastfeeding and HIV
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(https://www.thewellproject.org)

- Breastfeeding and HIV: Viewpoints from an Adult and Pediatric Provider [21] (expert conversation featuring Ciara "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 [22] (webinar discussion on the intersection of HIV, infant feeding, and criminalization)
- A Girl Like Me LIVE Episode 6: Breastfeeding and HIV with Ciara "Ci Ci" Covin and Heather O'Connor [23]
- We need to talk about breastfeeding and HIV [24] (panel discussion led by ViiV Healthcare and featuring Ci Ci Covin, Program Coordinator for The Well Project)
- Breastfeeding and HIV: What We Know and Considerations for Informed Choices [26] (December 2018 webinar)

Tags:

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HIV breastfeeding risks [32]
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