

# **HIV and breastfeeding: The health of mother and infant**

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## ABSTRACT

Basing decisions on adequate and unbiased information rather than ignorance is what informed choice is all about. Women with HIV have a right to information when they are making decisions and choices about whether to get pregnant carry a pregnancy to term and go through childbirth, and whether to breast-feed. These decisions must be based on awareness of all the risks that the woman is taking in relation to her own health, as well as her infant's future. The situation in communities besieged by the AIDS epidemic is such that the decision to breastfeed, bottlefeed or spoonfeed is usually a life-and-death decision. For this reason, all the information available on the possibility of pregnancy-related HIV transmission, including through breastfeeding, no matter how inconclusive, must be accessible to all women who may wish to weigh this risk against the social, cultural and economic realities of their own lives and those of their families and communities.