

**38% of child bearing women with HIV
in the UK would like to breastfeed
PACIFY STUDY**

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Background

- Breastfeeding is accepted as vital strategy due to its numerous benefits to the infant and the mother
- WHO advises women in resource limited settings, who are adhering to ART, to exclusively breastfeed for the first 6 months of the infant's life and continue supplemental breastfeeding for at least 12 months, and even up to 2 years or beyond

Background

- PROMISE data reports a transmission rate of <1% at 12 months in infants breast fed by mothers on suppressive ART¹
- In resource rich settings avoidance of breast feeding is still advised
- We explored the views of childbearing women with HIV in the UK around breast feeding

Methods

- The study group devised a six paged anonymised questionnaire which had ethical approval
- This was offered to women living with HIV in the third trimester of pregnancy or within 3 months post-partum
- Women were recruited from 12 UK clinics from June 2017–June 2018

Results

- 94 women responded to our questionnaire
- 69% of participants were Black African and median age 36 years (range 20-44)
- 92% had an undetectable HIV viral load, 1 % had a HIV viral load of 268 copies/ml and 7 % no data available
- Median CD4 count was 618 cells/mm³

Results

Table of results	Yes	No	No answer	Don't know
Do you think it's safe for women with detectable HIV in the blood (whether on or off treatment) to breastfeed?	3%	67%	6%	23%
Do you think it's safe for women on treatment with fully suppressed HIV ("asleep") in the blood to breastfeed?	27%	35%	4%	33%
If you were to breast feed, would you be willing to have monthly blood tests to check your viral load stays undetectable (asleep)?	88%	11%	1%	
If you were to breast feed, would you be willing for your baby to have a monthly blood test to make sure she/he does not get HIV?	84%	14%	2%	
Do you have any concerns about breast feeding whilst you are taking anti-HIV medicines?	50%	47%	2%	1%
Have you heard of "exclusive breast feeding"?	67%	31%	2%	

Results

Table of results	Yes	No	No answer	Don't know
Have any healthcare workers discussed breast feeding with you?	89%	9%	2%	
Would you like more information on the benefits and disadvantages of breastfeeding for women with HIV?	48%	51%	1%	
Have you ever had to lie about your reasons for not breast feeding?	66%	22%	12%	
Have any friends, family or members of your community ever questioned you about your reasons for not breast feeding?	62%	27%	12%	
Living with HIV, would you like to breast feed your child?	38%	48%	7%	6%

Conclusion

- 38% of participants said they would like to breastfeed their baby
- Stigma and secrecy was an issue for women
- It may be time to consider a more open dialogue with women about breastfeeding and optimise ways to support those that choose to do so

Thank you

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References

1. Flynn, P et al. Prevention of HIV-1 Transmission Through Breastfeeding. JAIDS Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndromes, 77(4), pp.383-392
2. <https://www.bhiva.org/pregnancy-guidelines>