

BREASTFEEDING AND HIV



Antiretroviral treatment and the medical monitoring of pregnancy allow women with HIV to be mothers and to have healthy virus-free babies. Breastfeeding is, however, not recommendable because the chances of the baby acquiring HIV cannot be completely ruled out.

Antiretroviral treatment reduces the amount of HIV in the blood. Having an undetectable viral load means that HIV cannot be transmitted during sexual intercourse, even if condoms or any other method of prevention are not used. This is known as U = U, which means undetectable equals untransmittable.

This is good news as it enables people with HIV to lead fuller sex lives and even to have children naturally. Furthermore, when it is the woman who has HIV, antiretroviral treatment and monitoring during pregnancy dramatically reduce the risk of the baby being born with HIV.

However, although antiretroviral treatment also dramatically decreases the amount of HIV in breast milk, the risk of the virus being transmitted to the breastfed baby does not disappear entirely.

The use formula milk during the lactation period is therefore recommended in countries where there is access to drinking water. Using formula instead of breastfeeding is one way of protecting the baby's health. No mother is any worse for not breastfeeding.

It is very important to ensure good hygiene to take proper care of the baby's health. You should therefore wash your hands well with soap and water before preparing the formula; sterilise bottles and all the material used in preparation, particularly before using them for the first time; boil the water before using it; and measure the amount of artificial milk required.

01 THERE ARE DIFFERENT TYPES OF FORMULA MILK:

Ready-to-drink formula: there is no need to add water. This is the most expensive.

Concentrated liquid formula: it needs to be mixed with water and is less expensive.

Powdered formula: water must be added. This is the cheapest of all.

In Spain, free formula milk is provided to the babies of mothers with HIV. For more information on how to obtain it, please contact the National AIDS Plan of the Ministry of Health by calling 91 596 40 34 35 or by writing an email to plansida@mscbs.es

02 MAIN POINTS:

- U = U is not applicable to breastfeeding. The risk of HIV transmission via this channel is, however, much lower if the mother has an undetectable viral load on account of treatment.
- The risk of transmitting HIV to the baby is zero when formula milk is used. This is what is recommended in Spain.
- There are programmes of free access to formula milk for the babies of mothers with HIV.

gt grupo de trabajo sobre tratamientos del VIH
ENTIDAD DECLARADA DE UTILIDAD PÚBLICA
ONG DE DESARROLLO

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SECRETARÍA DE ESTADO DE SANIDAD
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