



## Should Mothers with HIV Be Advised Not to Breastfeed?

### **It depends...**

IF a mother knows she is infected and  
IF breastmilk substitutes are affordable and can be fed safely with clean water  
and  
IF adequate health care is available and affordable,  
THEN the infant's chances of survival are greater if fed with breastmilk  
substitutes

### **However,**

IF infant mortality is high because of infectious diseases such as diarrhea or  
pneumonia or  
IF hygiene, sanitation, and access to clean water are poor or  
IF the cost of breastmilk substitutes is prohibitively high or  
IF access to adequate health care is limited,  
THEN breastfeeding may be the safest feeding option, even when the mother  
is HIV positive.

### **Be advised:**

Even where clean water is accessible, the cost of locally available formula  
exceeds the average household's income. Families who cannot buy sufficient  
supplies of breastmilk substitutes tend to:

- Over-dilute the breastmilk substitute
- Under-feed the infant
- Replace the breastmilk substitute with dangerous alternatives

In the 50 poorest developing countries, infant mortality averages over 100 deaths per 1,000  
live births. **Artificial feeding can triple the risk of infant death.**

Because breastfeeding is so critical to child survival, the dilemma of preventing HIV  
transmission through breastfeeding makes safe infant feeding a complex issue in PMTCT.  
However, our objective remains the same: saving the lives of children vulnerable to  
HIV/AIDS worldwide.