

INTEGRATING HIV PREVENTION INTO WOMEN'S WELLNESS



It is important for healthcare providers **to support the safety and bodily autonomy** (control of decision-making about what does and does not happen to one's body) of women in relation to their sexual health. HIV prevention, including PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis), is a critical component of women's sexual and reproductive healthcare. Ultimately, integrating sexual pleasure and choice into women's overall wellness improves health outcomes.

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HIV Testing

- **HIV testing and prevention** must be recognized as a **vital element of women's overall wellness** and incorporated into sexual and reproductive healthcare efforts throughout a person's lifespan
 - These efforts need to be holistic, valuing *all* elements of women's well-being (e.g., physical, emotional, lifestyle preferences and choices)
- Women should be offered HIV testing as a part of their **regular wellness routine** as recommended in US federal HIV treatment and prevention guidelines, **not just during pregnancy**

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Reframing HIV Risk

- Racism, geography, trauma experiences, and other **non-behavioral factors are drivers of HIV vulnerability**; it is important for providers to account for these factors by being more inclusive in who is offered HIV testing and prevention tools, including PrEP
- The language and framing of “risk” often proves not to be relevant to how women view their lives. There is an urgent need for providers to **engage in dialogue that prioritizes overall wellness**, especially in the context of HIV prevention

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Normalizing HIV Testing and Prevention

- Offering HIV testing and prevention options like **PrEP to all sexually active women can normalize HIV prevention efforts**
 - CDC recommendations instruct providers to talk about PrEP and its benefits with all their patients who are having sex, and to **prescribe PrEP to anyone who wants it** because some patients may feel uncomfortable reporting behaviors due to anticipated stigma
 - While **Black women and other women of color** are disproportionately impacted by HIV, they **may not consider themselves affected by HIV** or recognize the need for PrEP
 - Providing women with **tools to understand the benefits of PrEP** is a critical component of HIV prevention in the **context of sexual health and harm reduction for injection drug use**
 - Questions about sexuality and drug use should be presented in a **factual, non-judgmental way**

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Sexual Pleasure and HIV Prevention

- Efforts to promote sexual pleasure have been demonstrated to improve the effectiveness of sexual and reproductive health interventions, including HIV prevention strategies
 - Providers need to engage women in **discussions about sexual health that center women's sexual pleasure**. While talking about sex may be challenging, discussions around sexual health may increase a sense of well-being and open the door to discussion around effective prevention and autonomy
 - Sexual and reproductive health mean different things to different women – providers need to meet them where they are
 - **Prevention tools like PrEP can increase women's bodily autonomy** (control of and decision-making about what does and does not happen to one's body) and sense of agency around sex

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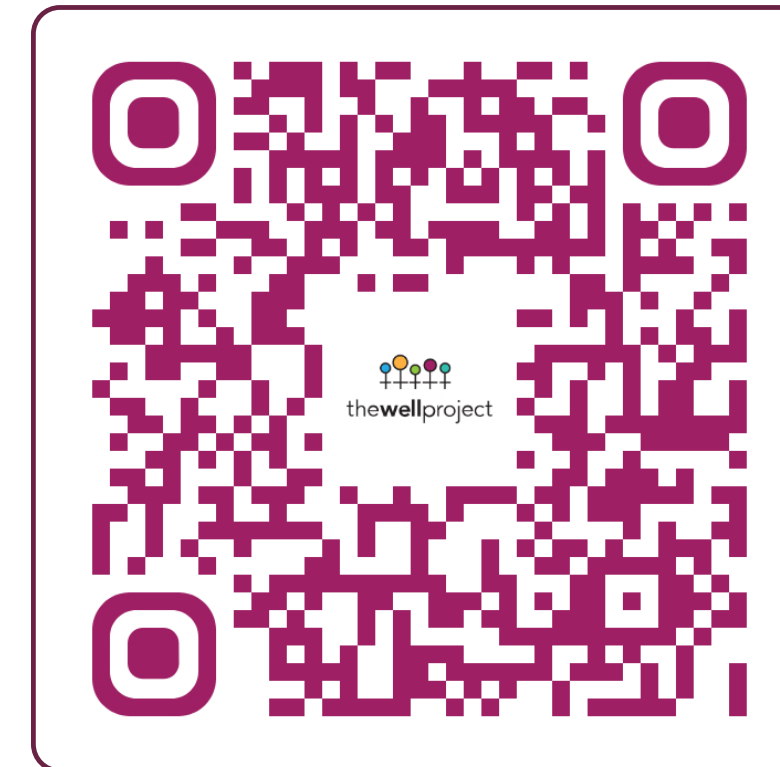
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