



***Session 5: Reproductive Life with HIV:***  
**Action Steps from Pregnancy Planning to Infant Feeding**

*March 6, 2025, 12pm ET / 9am PT*

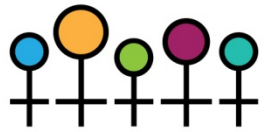


*Together, we can change the course of the HIV epidemic...one woman at a time.*

#onewomanatatime

[www.thewellproject.org](http://www.thewellproject.org)

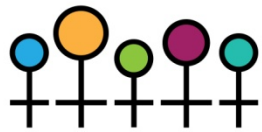
#thewellproject



the**well**project

# About The Well Project

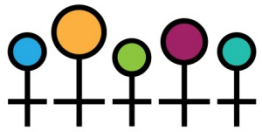
- Non-profit organization with a mission to change the course of the HIV/AIDS pandemic through a unique and comprehensive focus on women and girls across the gender spectrum
- Leverages technology to improve health outcomes and increase quality of life for women and girls living with HIV
- Our focus: education and information, community support, advocacy and leadership, collaborative engagement, and women-focused HIV research
- Access our resources and join our community at [www.thewellproject.org](http://www.thewellproject.org)



thewellproject

# About *WATCH! 2.0*

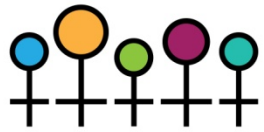
- Treatment advocacy webinar series, based on our successful 2015 series *A Place at the Table: WATCH!*
- 7 monthly sessions; 1 hour each
- Capacity building and training for women living with HIV and with reasons for HIV prevention across the gender spectrum
- Series topics will include advocacy basics, treatment and prevention, sexual and reproductive health, aging, research
- Participation in live sessions encouraged; recordings of sessions will be available to those unable to attend
- Certificates of completion will be issued to participants upon finishing the series and required evaluations/post-tests based on content of each episode
- *This episode is supported by ViiV Healthcare's Positive Action Grant Program*



thewellproject

# A Note on Gender and Language

- We are proud to be a resource that welcomes and focuses on women across the gender spectrum – that means all women who identify as such – as well as all people who can benefit from our materials and support networks
- We not only acknowledge and affirm but celebrate the existence of our community members of trans and nonbinary experience
- The language we use on our website and in our programs reflects this affirmation; our commitment is to grow ***stronger*** in this practice and ***more inclusive*** in our language



thewellproject

# Agenda

- Welcome
- Getting Pregnant
- Pregnancy
- Birth Options
- Infant Feeding Decision Making
- Postpartum Support
- Q&A
- Closing

# Today's Presenters



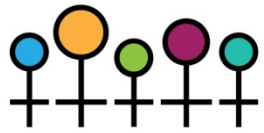
**Ciarra "Ci Ci" Covin**  
*Moderator*  
The Well Project



**Heather O'Connor**  
The Reunion Project /  
National Working Positive  
Coalition



**Ieshia Scott**  
Dandelions Movement



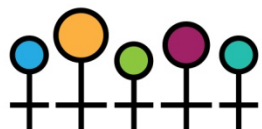
the**well**project

# Pregnancy and HIV

Women living with HIV ***can and do have babies!*** This has been true all through the HIV pandemic...



...and ***living longer, healthier lives*** due to HIV treatment advances can make family-building decisions that much easier



thewellproject

# Good News and Progress

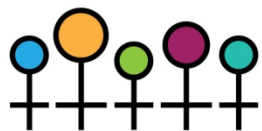
## 1990s

- Research showed **zidovudine** for pregnant people living with HIV reduced chance of transmitting HIV to their babies
  - Known as **perinatal** or **vertical transmission** ("mother-to-child transmission" language considered stigmatizing)

## Now

- Standard practice to:
  - Test pregnant people for HIV
  - Provide HIV treatment to pregnant people living with HIV
  - Give HIV drugs to babies of people living with HIV
- With HIV treatment and undetectable viral load, likelihood of transmitting HIV to a baby during pregnancy, birth, **and** breast/chestfeeding can be ***less than 1 in 100***



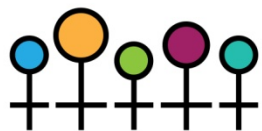


the**well**project

# Before You Get Pregnant...

*Unplanned pregnancies are common in general and among women living with HIV – **if possible...***

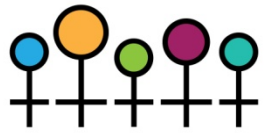
- Discuss plans with HIV care provider
- Find an obstetrician (OB) or midwife familiar with HIV
- Ask your HIV provider and OB/midwife to talk to each other, coordinate care before/during pregnancy
- Put together support network
  - Caring, non-judgmental, know about HIV and pregnancy
  - Partners, providers, counselors, other women living with HIV considering pregnancy or who have had children



thewellproject

# Birth Support and Self-Advocacy

- *You are your own best advocate!*
  - If you have a partner, they can support your voice
- Doulas – trained professionals present before, during, and/or after birth
  - Focus on the wellbeing and agency of birthing parents
- Can be crucial for Black birthing people and their babies
  - Due to effects of racism, experience serious complications and death at shocking rates compared to general birthing population

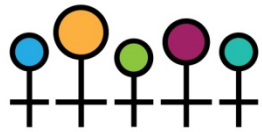


thewellproject

# Ways of Giving Birth

## *Vaginal Delivery*

- Recommended for someone on combination HIV treatment with a low viral load (1,000 copies or fewer)
- C-section has not been shown to further reduce their already low likelihood of transmitting HIV to their baby

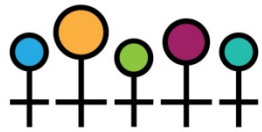


thewellproject

# Ways of Giving Birth

- **C-Section (Surgical Delivery)**

- Not recommended for people living with HIV unless they:
  - Have an unknown viral load
  - Have a viral load  $\geq 1,000$  copies
  - Need a C-section for reasons other than preventing HIV transmission
- Done before labor begins and birthing parent's "water" breaks
  - Reduces baby's contact with parent's blood
  - May reduce risk of transmission in certain cases
- People who have C-sections more likely to get infections than those who give birth vaginally

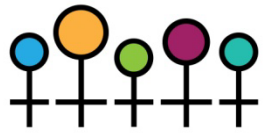


thewellproject

# Postpartum Support

- Weeks and months after baby arrives involve massive transition, challenge, and healing; *too little support!*
- Parents may struggle and need support around:
  - Staying connected to healthcare
  - Accessing pediatric care for baby
  - Mental healthcare
  - Peer and community connections
  - Breast/chestfeeding safely and successfully
- *Take our postpartum needs assessment survey!*

[bit.ly/PostpartumHIV](https://bit.ly/PostpartumHIV)



thewellproject

# Breast/Chestfeeding Is ...

- Preferred infant-feeding method of the human species
  - Recommended by healthcare providers
  - “Breast is Best”
- Infinitely beneficial for baby and lactating parent
- Long-time standard of care for parents living with HIV in low-resource settings



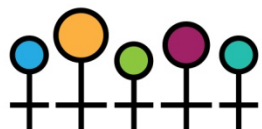


thewellproject

# HIV and Infant Feeding Guidelines

## Pre-2023 ...

- “... in the United States, to prevent HIV transmission, it is ***recommended that mothers living with HIV not breastfeed their infants***” (CDC; HHS)
- HHS perinatal HIV guidelines evolved over time → support counseling and “harm-reduction” approach for people living with HIV “who choose to breastfeed ***despite intensive counseling***”



thewellproject

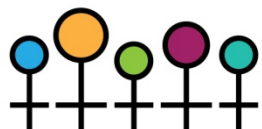
# HIV and Infant Feeding Guidelines

**January 31, 2023**

Significant updates to US Perinatal HIV Clinical Guidelines (inform healthcare providers on pregnancy, infant care, and HIV)

- Updated to (among other points):
  - Recommend providers support parents' decision to breast/chestfeed
  - Reflect current knowledge about low likelihood of HIV transmission through breast milk
  - Discuss benefits of breast/chestfeeding





thewellproject

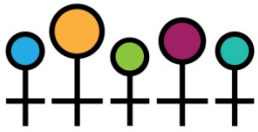
# Breast/Chestfeeding: Benefits

## ***For baby:***

- Nutrition and protection
- Health beyond infancy (lower risk of type 2 diabetes, obesity, etc)
- Cost, availability, and convenience

## ***For lactating parent:***

- Bonding
- Mental health
- Maternal blood loss
- Overall maternal health (lower risk of breast and ovarian cancers, high blood pressure, diabetes, etc)



the**well**project

# Learn More!

Scan the QR code for **more resources** on this topic from The Well Project, and to access the **video and survey** following this session!



[@thewellproject](https://www.facebook.com/thewellproject)



[@thewellprojecthiv](https://www.instagram.com/thewellprojecthiv)



[/thewellprojectHIV](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC.../thewellprojectHIV)



[/company/the-well-project](https://www.linkedin.com/company/the-well-project)



[@thewellprojecthiv](https://twitter.com/thewellprojecthiv)