

# Breastfeeding Special Topics: Breastfeeding and Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) for Opioid Use Disorder and Breastfeeding for People at Risk for HIV

## Take Home Messages

- Breastfeeding is recommended for mothers stable on methadone or buprenorphine (Suboxone)
- Medication-Assisted Treatment should not be a contraindication to breastfeeding
- Pediatric providers should offer a family-centered, nonjudgmental, harm reduction approach that supports breastfeeding for people with HIV on consistent antiretroviral treatment

## Evidence Base

**Minimal Infant Exposure:** Buprenorphine and methadone transfer into breast milk in very small amounts, well below therapeutic infant doses.(1,2) Over 50 years of evidence demonstrates the safety and benefits of MAT during pregnancy and lactation.(3) Similarly, research has shown that maternal antiretroviral treatment (ART) or infant antiretroviral (ARV) prophylaxis during breastfeeding was effective in reducing the risk of HIV transmission to infants.(4)

**Maternal and Infant Bonding Benefits:** Breastfeeding promotes maternal-infant attachment, which is critical for recovery. Breastfeeding benefits include immune protection, reduced infection risk, and improved neurodevelopment. Breastfeeding also supports maternal mental health and treatment retention.

## Clinical Guidance

### **Recommend Breastfeeding When...**

- Mother is stable on methadone or buprenorphine maintenance therapy
- Mother has no concurrent substance use or poly-substance use disorder
- Mother is engaged in comprehensive treatment and prenatal/postpartum care
- Mother with HIV started ARV during or before pregnancy and can continue treatment while breastfeeding

### **Counseling Points for Patients**

- Breastfeeding is safe and encouraged while on MAT and/or ARV (with good compliance and undetectable viral loads)
- Continue MAT and ARV as prescribed; stopping medication increases relapse risk
- Report any concerns about infant lethargy, poor feeding, or breathing changes

## Policy and Professional Endorsements

- [American Academy of Pediatrics](#): Supports breastfeeding for mothers on stable MAT; supports breastfeeding for people with HIV where ART was initiated during pregnancy, there is evidence of sustained viral suppression, and parent has continuous ART access
- [American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists](#): Recommends breastfeeding in MAT unless contraindicated
- [Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine](#): Clinical protocol affirms safety of MAT and breastfeeding
- [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#): Encourages breastfeeding in MAT programs
- [World Health Organization](#): Recommends breastfeeding with ART for breastfeeding parent and/or infant ARV prophylaxis

## Additional Resources

- [Methadone Fact Sheet](#): Mother to Baby
- [Medication-Assisted Treatment for Opioid Use Disorder in Pregnancy & Breastfeeding](#): Infant Risk Center
- [Methadone - Drugs and Lactation Database \(LactMed®\) - NCBI Bookshelf](#): LactMed
- [Infant Feeding for Persons Living With and at Risk for HIV in the United States](#): American Academy of Pediatrics
- [Breastfeeding for People with HIV: AAP Policy Explained](#): HealthyChildren.org
- [Perinatal HIV Exposure Management \(for Breastfeeding and Non-Breastfeeding Newborns\)](#): Connecticut Children's