Researchers Say All Breast-Fed Babies of HIV-Positive Mothers Should Receive PrEP

An unacceptably high rate of mother-to-child transmission of HIV still occurs in many African nations, often through breast feeding.

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With mother-to-child transmission (MTCT) rates of HIV still unacceptably high in many African nations, researchers say that all babies born to HIV-positive mothers should receive pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), aidsmap reports. In cases of MTCT, the virus is often transmitted through breast feeding.

Researchers from the ANRS 12174 randomized controlled trial of PrEP for infants noted that the rate of MTCT of HIV is 8.9 percent among babies born to HIV-positive mothers in the 21 African nations with the most severe epidemics. Just five of those nations have brought their rates below 5 percent, including Botswana, Namibia, Uganda, South Africa and Swaziland.

Although many women never start taking ARVs or stop taking them a year after starting, a majority of women in the ANRS 12174 apparently preferred the idea of giving their baby PrEP to taking ART themselves. The ANRS trial gave either Kaletra (lopinavir/ritonavir) or Epivir (lamivudine) as PrEP for 12 months of breast feeding to HIV-positive new mothers. The trial succeeded in bringing MTCT of the virus from mothers not taking antiretrovirals (ARVs) to just 0.5 percent per year. The mothers gave their babies over 90 percent of their PrEP doses.

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