



THINKING ABOUT HAVING A BABY?

FOR MEN LIVING WITH HIV WHO ARE SINGLE OR PARTNERED

Each family-building journey is unique. For people living with HIV, there are many options for making a child part of your life. It is important to plan ahead and connect with a supportive medical provider.

This resource can help you make informed decisions about ways to have a family. Parenting partnerships can be formed in a variety of ways, including single parenting, co-parenting with a single person, and co-parenting with a couple. Whatever path you choose, we support you.

Safer Conception and Optimizing Health

Conception requires a sperm, an egg, and a uterus. Many people choose to conceive with the help of assisted reproductive technologies. An increasing number of fertility clinics offer these procedures to HIV-affected individuals, couples, and co-parents. Generally, fertility clinics require the person living with HIV has an undetectable HIV viral load. Sperm washing is also routinely done for all assisted reproductive procedures. Sperm washing separates the sperm from seminal fluid, which can contain HIV.

Whether members of a parenting partnership are both living with HIV or only one is living with HIV, there are multiple options for having a baby without passing on HIV.

Undetectable=untransmittable

HIV treatment helps keep people living with HIV healthy and helps get the virus down to an undetectable level. "Undetectable" means that a test cannot detect the virus in a blood sample from a person living with HIV. Someone who is undetectable for 6 or more continuous months while on HIV treatment does not transmit the virus during sex.

Undetectable doesn't mean that there's no HIV present in the blood. It means the virus is being controlled. This concept is also known as U=U, short for "undetectable=untransmittable."

Get tested and treated for sexually transmitted infections (STIs)

STIs can affect your fertility and, if passed on to your birthing partner, may be dangerous during pregnancy and delivery. Many STIs have no symptoms. It is important for you and your birthing partner to get tested and treated for STIs before trying to get pregnant.

PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis)

PrEP is a pill to prevent HIV. PrEP may be taken by the surrogate or co-parent before sex or before assisted reproductive procedures. When taken as prescribed, PrEP is highly effective. It's safe and generally well tolerated and can be used during conception, pregnancy, and breast/chestfeeding. Most insurance plans (public and private) cover PrEP.

PrEP works for women, men, people of transgender experience, people of all sexual orientations and gender identities, youth, and people who inject drugs.



Assisted reproductive technologies

In vitro fertilization (IVF)

A provider removes the eggs and a lab fertilizes them with washed sperm. The provider places the fertilized eggs directly into the uterus. IVF may increase the possibility of genetic problems and the chance of having twins or triplets.

Intrauterine insemination (IUI)

A provider injects prepared sperm directly into the uterus during ovulation. You and your partner may choose to have your sperm prepared via sperm washing, or use sperm from a known or anonymous donor.

Sperm storage

Several clinics in the U.S. specialize in the storage of washed sperm from people living with HIV. This frozen sperm can be used in IUI or IVF. Laws and medical practices regarding access to sperm washing and assisted reproductive technologies for people living with HIV may vary from state to state.

Family-Building Approaches

Some people choose parenting situations in which the parents may not be married, living together, or in a romantic relationship with each other. There are many creative ways people form families:

- Two or more people choosing to raise a child together
- Single parenting
- Single people raising children in a community
- Polyamorous family arrangements

Gestational surrogacy

An embryo (fertilized egg) is created in a lab using an egg from a donor who is not the surrogate (person who carries the pregnancy). The embryo is then transferred to the surrogate's uterus by in vitro fertilization (IVF) to establish the pregnancy. The resulting child is genetically unrelated to the surrogate. The egg donor could be a friend, relative, or partner. They may or may not be an intended co-parent. The sperm may or may not be yours.

Traditional surrogacy

A surrogate gets pregnant with their own egg via intravaginal insemination (IVI) or intracervical insemination (ICI)—both of which can be done at home. Another option is intrauterine insemination (IUI), which can be done in a clinic with a midwife or obstetrician, or at home with a midwife. The surrogate is not an intended co-parent and traditionally does not have any parenting rights.

Note: In the United States, gestational surrogacy is more common than traditional surrogacy as there are more legal protections for the intended parents.

Sperm donor

If your body does not produce enough sperm or your viral load is unstable, you may decide to use a known or anonymous sperm donor. The donor may or may not have a relationship with you and the child.

Adoption

More than 2% of U.S. children are adopted. You can adopt from foster care, through private companies within the U.S., and from other countries through private organizations and international government agencies.

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1996 prohibits discrimination based on HIV status. However, people living with HIV—as well as single parents, same-sex partners, and trans people—may still face discrimination and stigma depending upon where you live. You may decide to seek legal assistance and connect with local adoptive parent support groups to help you on your family-building journey.



Legal protections around family building for people living with HIV

It is important to understand your rights and obligations in the family-building process. Legal protections around family building for people living with HIV vary greatly depending on where you live. For updated information on legal risks, rights, and protections, consider seeking professional legal advice to understand the laws in your area.

- AIDS Legal Referral Panel: www.alrp.org
- Lambda Legal: www.lambdalegal.org
- LGBT Bar/Family Law Institute: www.lgbtbar.org/annual/program/family-law-institute
- National Center for Lesbian Rights: www.nclrights.org
- Transgender Law Center: www.transgenderlawcenter.org

Further resources

- Society for Assisted Reproductive Technology: www.sart.org
- Our Family Coalition for SF Bay Area LGBTQ parents and families: www.ourfamily.org
- COLAGE organization for people with LGBTQ parents: www.colage.org
- Center of Excellence for Transgender Health: www.transhealth.ucsf.edu
- Men Having Babies support network and financial assistance program for gay men: www.menhavingbabies.org
- Gays With Kids blog including personal stories of family building with HIV: www.gayswithkids.com

