

# Lactational Amenorrhea Method

LAM



**Balanced Counseling Strategy**



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## LAM

### General information:

- LAM is the use of fully or nearly fully breastfeeding to delay return to fertility after having a baby. It is a temporary family planning method.
- LAM requires 3 conditions. All 3 must be met:
  - 1) Your monthly bleeding has not returned since giving birth.
  - 2) The baby is fully or nearly fully breastfed and is fed often, day and night.
  - 3) The baby is less than 6 months old.
- Safe for a woman with HIV/AIDS, even if she takes antiretroviral (ARV) medicines.
- Mothers with HIV could pass HIV to their infants through breastfeeding.
- Does not protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV.

**Effectiveness for pregnancy prevention:** Pregnancy rate in first 6 months after childbirth is:

- When *all* 3 conditions are met — Less than 1 pregnancy per 100 women (1%)
- Typical use (not all 3 conditions are met) — 2 pregnancies per 100 women (2%)

### How method works:

- Fully or nearly fully breastfeeding stops the release of hormones that cause a woman to release eggs from her ovaries (ovulate).

### Important facts:

- Does not interfere with sex.
- No costs and no supplies needed.
- Effectiveness after 6 months postpartum is not certain.
- Fully or nearly fully breastfeeding may be inconvenient or difficult for some women.
- Does not protect against STIs, including HIV.

- Use condoms (male or female) if you feel at risk of STIs, including HIV.
- World Health Organization (WHO) suggests that HIV-infected women use replacement feeding instead of breastfeeding if it is:
  - Acceptable to the mother and baby.
  - Affordable for the mother.
  - Feasible to purchase or make.
  - Sustainable (will be available for the full 6 months).
  - Safe for the infant.
- If replacement feeding does not meet these 5 criteria, exclusive breastfeeding is recommended for the first 6 months of the baby’s life.
- When mothers with HIV switch to replacement foods, they should avoid a prolonged period of mixed feeding (breastfeeding + replacement foods).
- Stopping breastfeeding over a period of 2 days to 3 weeks poses the least risk of HIV transmission to the baby.
- Once a mother begins replacement feeding, LAM is no longer effective. She must use another method of contraception.

### **Method not advised if:**

- You last gave birth over 6 months ago.
- Your monthly bleeding has returned.
- You have begun to breastfeed less often, and the majority of feedings are no longer breast milk.
- Your health care provider advised you against breastfeeding.

**Side effects:** None

### **Health benefits of breastfeeding:**

- Reduces bleeding after childbirth.
- Provides the healthiest food for the baby.
- Protects the baby from diarrhea.
- Passes on the mother’s immunities to the baby. This helps protect the baby from diseases such as measles and pneumonia. These diseases can kill babies.
- Helps develop a close bond between the mother and baby.

## **How to use:**

- Start breastfeeding as soon as possible after the baby is born.
- Feed only breast milk day and night. You are protected against pregnancy if all 3 conditions are present:
  - 1) Your menstrual bleeding has not returned.
  - 2) Your baby is fully or nearly fully breastfed. You must breastfeed often, both day and night.
  - 3) Your baby is less than 6 months old.
- If and when any of these conditions are not present, you should:
  - Use another method for effective family planning.
  - Keep breastfeeding your baby if possible. Breastfeed even while feeding your baby other food or liquids.

## **Return to the health care facility any time if:**

- You have any questions or problems.
- Any 1 of the 3 conditions needed for LAM changes, and you need another method.
- Before 6 months postpartum to choose another method.