

# 9 | Information for Breastfeeding Employees



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## WHERE TO FIND BREASTFEEDING HELP AND SUPPORT

- Your health care provider
- Lactation consultants in your community [www.ilca.org](http://www.ilca.org)
- La Leche League International 1-800-LALECHE or [www.llli.org](http://www.llli.org)
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB) [www.mchb.hrsa.gov/](http://www.mchb.hrsa.gov/)
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)/Office on Women’s Health 1-800-994-WOMAN (9662) or [www.womenshealth.gov](http://www.womenshealth.gov)
- Pumping Mothers’ Support—[www.pumpingmoms.org](http://www.pumpingmoms.org)
- Working and Pumping—[www.workandpump.com](http://www.workandpump.com)
- March of Dimes—[www.marchofdimes.com](http://www.marchofdimes.com)
- Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies Coalition—[www.hmhb.org/](http://www.hmhb.org/)

## GETTING STARTED WITH BREASTFEEDING

### DURING PREGNANCY

- Pregnancy is the best time to prepare for breastfeeding and returning to work.
- Attend prenatal classes which may be available at your hospital, workplace or private physician clinic.
- Attend La Leche League meetings to learn more about how to combine breastfeeding and employment.
- Talk with your supervisor to discuss your plans to breastfeed. Find out if your company provides a lactation support program for employees and, if not, ask about a private area where you can comfortably and safely express milk.

### DURING YOUR MATERNITY LEAVE

- Take as many weeks off as you can. At least six weeks helps you recover from childbirth and establish breastfeeding. Taking 12-16 weeks is even better.
- Focus on your baby during this time and make time to rest for 20-30 minutes every few hours. Housework can wait or be taken on by other family members and friends.
- Practice expressing your milk by hand or with a quality breast pump, and freeze one to two ounces at a time to save for your baby after you return to work. This also helps you build up your milk supply. Choose times during the day when you seem to have the most milk. For many women, this is early in the morning. Some women express milk during or after their baby nurses since the milk has already “let down” and flows easily.
- Be patient with yourself. It takes time for both you and your baby to adjust to your new lives together. Follow your baby’s cues for when and how long to breastfeed, and enjoy this special time together.

- Help your baby adjust to taking breast milk from a bottle (or cup for infants older than 3-4 months) shortly before you return to work. Because babies are used to nursing with Mom, they usually drink from a bottle or cup when offered by somebody else.
- Talk with your family and your childcare provider about your progress and your intent to continue breastfeeding, and let them know you are counting on their support and help.

## BACK AT WORK

### RETURN TO WORK GRADUALLY

Talk with your supervisor about options that have worked for other women.

- Start back to work part-time for a brief period before working full-time.
- Work from home or combine working at home and at work.
- Go back to work on a Thursday or Friday or just before one to two days off, depending on your work week. This gives you and your baby a shorter separation period so that you can adjust to being away from each other before you go back to work full-time.
- Take Wednesdays off for a few weeks for a mid-week break, and breastfeed on your baby's schedule to rebuild your milk supply.
- Work a split shift, with a long break in the middle of the day to go home and be with your baby. This can work well for hospitality workers.
- Consider using childcare close to work so you can visit and breastfeed your baby, if feasible, based on your work schedule.
- When you arrive to pick up your baby from childcare, take time to breastfeed first. This will give you both time to reconnect before traveling home and returning to other family responsibilities.
- While age limits vary, some employers have a “bring-your-baby-to-work” policy. This policy allows women to bring infants younger than 6 months to work so they can breastfeed during the day. Check with your employer to see if they have a “bring-your-baby-to-work” policy or if they might be willing to begin one. Learn more at [www.babiesatwork.org](http://www.babiesatwork.org).

### GET A QUALITY BREAST PUMP

A good-quality double electric breast pump may be your best strategy for efficiently removing milk during the workday. Contact your local hospital or public health department to find out where to buy or rent a good pump. Electric pumps that allow you to express milk from both breasts at the same time reduce pumping time. Find out if your company insurance policy provides partial or full coverage for the cost of a breast pump.

### IDENTIFY A PRIVATE PLACE TO EXPRESS MILK

Work with your supervisor to determine a private place to express your milk. Many companies provide a lactation program with a dedicated private lactation room for expressing milk.

- If, during pregnancy, you find out that your company does not provide a private lactation room, identify a temporary private area you can use. Ideas: an employee office with a door, a conference room, or a little-used closet or storage area. The basic essentials are that the room is private, can be locked when in use, and has an electrical outlet if you are using an electric breast pump.
- Explain to your supervisor that it is best not to express milk in a restroom. Restrooms are unsanitary and there are usually no electrical outlets. It can also be difficult to manage a pump in a toilet stall.

## WHEN TO EXPRESS MILK

During a typical eight-hour work period, express milk for about 10-15 minutes two or three times. Remember that in the first months of life, babies need to breastfeed 8 to 12 times in 24 hours. So you need to express and store milk when you are away from your baby during usual feeding times. This will maintain a sufficient amount of milk for your childcare provider to feed your baby while you are at work. The number of times you need to express milk at work should be the same as the number of feedings your baby will need while you are away. As the baby gets older, the number of feeding times may decrease. When babies are around 6 months old and begin solid foods, they often need to feed less often. Many women use their regular breaks and lunch period to pump. Others talk with their supervisor about coming in early and/or staying late to make up the time needed to express milk. It usually takes 15 minutes to express milk, plus time to get to and from the lactation room.

## SAMPLE PUMPING SCHEDULE AT WORK

### Traditional 8-hour work period:

<b>8:00 a.m.</b> Begin work	<b>9:45-10:00 a.m.</b> Use break to express milk	<b>12:00 noon</b> Take allowed lunch period to express milk	<b>2:30-2:45 p.m.</b> Use break to express milk	<b>5:00 p.m.</b> Leave work
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## STORING YOUR MILK

Because your milk is full of antibodies that fight germs and bacteria, it can be safely stored and given to the baby later. Breast milk is food, so it is safe to keep in an employee refrigerator or a cooler with ice packs. Discuss with your supervisor the best place for you to store your milk. If you work in a medical field, do not store milk in the same refrigerators as medical specimens. Be sure to label the milk container with your name and the date you expressed the milk.

### Storage Duration of Fresh Human Milk for Use with Healthy Full Term Infants

LOCATION	TEMPERATURE	DURATION	COMMENTS
Countertop, table	Room temperature (up to 77°F or 25°C)	6–8 hours	Containers should be covered and kept as cool as possible; covering the container with a cool towel may keep milk cooler.
Insulated cooler bag	5-39°F or -15-4°C	24 hours	Keep ice packs in contact with milk containers at all times, limit opening cooler bag.
Refrigerator	39°F or 4°C	5 days	Store milk in the back of the main body of the refrigerator.
Freezer compartment of a refrigerator	5°F or -15°C	2 weeks	Store milk toward the back of the freezer, where temperature is most constant. Milk stored for longer durations in the ranges listed is safe, but some of the lipids in the milk undergo degradation resulting in lower quality.
Freezer compartment of refrigerator with separate doors	0°F or -18°C	3–6 months	
Chest or upright deep freezer	-4°F or -20°C	6–12 months	

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Proper handling and storage of human milk: Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine storage duration of fresh human milk for use with healthy full term infants guidelines*. Available at: [http://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/recommendations/handling\\_breastmilk.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/recommendations/handling_breastmilk.htm). Accessed May 4, 2009.

## GETTING SUPPORT FOR BREASTFEEDING

### Approaching Your Supervisor

Most employers are happy to provide the support you need, as long as they know what your needs are and how important it is for you to have their support. If your company does not have a breastfeeding support program, it could be that no one has asked for one.

- Breastfeeding is the healthiest choice for your baby, resulting in fewer illnesses, infections, and certain types of skin irritations (dermatitis). It also helps you recover from pregnancy and may reduce your risk of certain types of cancer. Be sure to discuss these important reasons to breastfeed with your supervisor.
- Your supervisor may not know what you need to continue breastfeeding. Simply explain your basic needs for privacy and flexible breaks to express milk.
- If you are uncomfortable talking about your breastfeeding needs in person, consider writing a letter or memo first. This also documents your need for support and gives your supervisor time to think about your needs before you discuss it together.
- Show how meeting your breastfeeding needs will benefit the company.
  - Employees are less likely to miss work to take care of a sick baby because the baby is healthier. (This is true for both moms and dads.)
  - Health care costs are lower since both baby and mother are healthier.
  - Employees who receive support for breastfeeding are happier and more productive.
- Explain that you are committed to keeping the milk expression area clean when you are through, storing your milk properly, and not taking longer than necessary for milk expression breaks.
- Be prepared. Consider possible concerns your supervisor might have and offer solutions. Be a team member. Be sensitive to the issues that are important to your company, and show how supporting your efforts to breastfeed can help you both accomplish your goals.
- Be sure to show your appreciation for efforts made by your supervisor to support your breastfeeding.

### Dealing with Co-workers

- Seek to understand co-workers' concerns and work together to find solutions.
- Let co-workers know that breastfeeding is not only the healthiest choice for you and your baby; it also helps lower the company's health care costs.
- If other workers do not understand the breaks you are taking to express milk, remind them that you are using allowed breaks and making up any additional time you miss.

### Finding Other Breastfeeding Mothers

- Seek out other breastfeeding mothers at work and share experiences and tips through e-mail or even a monthly lunchtime mothers' support meeting. If there are no other breastfeeding women at work, ask your local hospital for information about local mothers' groups.

## RESOURCES

### **American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)**

American Academy of Pediatrics' breastfeeding initiative contains a resource guide with websites and publications—from both AAP and other organizations—for families about breastfeeding.

[www.aap.org/breastfeeding/](http://www.aap.org/breastfeeding/)

### **La Leche League International**

La Leche League was founded to give information and encouragement, mainly through individual help, to all mothers who want to breastfeed their babies, while complementing the care of the physician and other health care professionals. Its website offers numerous publications, including books, pamphlets and articles on breastfeeding, parenting, and managing employment with breastfeeding. La Leche League mothers' groups are located in many areas throughout the country.

[www.llli.org](http://www.llli.org) or 1-800-LALECHE

### **March of Dimes**

The March of Dimes' mission is to improve the health of babies by preventing birth defects, premature birth and infant mortality. The website also contains educational information about breastfeeding strategies, pictorial guides, and support groups. Local March of Dimes chapters may also be a helpful resource.

[www.marchofdimes.com](http://www.marchofdimes.com)

### **MyPyramid for Pregnancy and Breastfeeding**

This website has nutrition tools to help mothers eat right during pregnancy and lactation.

[www.mypyramid.gov/mypyramidmoms/](http://www.mypyramid.gov/mypyramidmoms/)

### **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services/Office on Women's Health**

Downloadable information sheets on breastfeeding. A toll-free telephone information line is also available (800-994-9662), staffed by operators who are trained peer counselors. "Easy Guide to Breastfeeding" booklets, offered as free downloads, are tailored for five different audiences (white, African-American, American Indian and Alaska Native, Chinese and Latina).

[www.womenshealth.gov](http://www.womenshealth.gov)