

# Health Promotion in Motion



## Breastfeeding and Work

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend breastfeeding as the healthiest way to feed babies. Both recognize a preventive link between obesity and breastfeeding.

### Why Does Breastfeeding Matter to Me?

- **Breastfed babies get sick less often.** That means fewer parents miss work to stay home and take care of their infants.
  - Breastfeeding boosts a baby's immune system. That means protection from common childhood illnesses such as ear infections, coughs, colds, and stomach upsets.
  - Babies that are breastfed at least 6 months have a reduced risk of acute childhood lymphocytic leukemia and acute myelogenous leukemia.
- **Breastfeeding reduces risk of childhood overweight and obesity.** Experts at CDC estimate breastfeeding can prevent 15 to 20 percent of childhood obesity— especially when:
  - Breastfeeding continues to three months of age and beyond, and
  - Infants are exclusively breastfed (no formula or solid foods) to age 6 months
- **Breastfeeding moms have reduced risk of ovarian and pre-menopausal breast cancers.**
- **Worksites benefit** when they support breastfeeding among their employees and their employees' partners. The benefits are many:
  - Reduction in sick time taken by moms and dads for infants' illnesses
  - Lower health care and insurance costs for breastfed infants
  - Greater productivity
  - Improved employee morale and loyalty to the company
  - Retention of experienced employees





## Returning to Work

When breastfeeding moms return to work, they have to plan how to make time for and find a place to pump milk at work. Without support, it could mean breastfeeding less often or stopping all together. Many moms face these challenges.

- In the United States, nearly 55 percent of women with children under the age of 3 are employed.
- In 2005, more than 78 percent of New Hampshire infants were initially breastfed, however, by age 6 months, only 48 percent of babies were breastfed.

## How Can Worksites Support Breastfeeding Mothers?

A flexible work schedule and breastfeeding-friendly policy both help women successfully return to work and continue to breastfeed. These practices also send the message that breastfeeding employees are valued. The following factors have been found to promote successful return to work and continued breastfeeding:



- **A Place to Express Milk**
  - A small, clean, private space
  - An electric outlet to power a breast pump
  - Access to a nearby safe water supply to wash hands and rinse breast-pump equipment
  - Note: Employees should never be asked to express milk or breastfeed in a restroom. Breast milk is food, and restrooms are an unsanitary place to prepare food.
- **Flexible Breaks** Mothers need to express milk about every three hours to maintain a healthy milk supply and relieve uncomfortable fullness. Each session usually takes about 15 minutes plus time to get to and from the pumping room. Breastfeeding moms find they usually need only an hour per workday to pump milk. This can easily be divided between breaks and mealtimes.
- **Storage** Milk can be stored in a personal cooler with an ice pack or in a refrigerator.
- **Education** Employees value information they receive during their pregnancy – including information about continuing to breastfeed when they return to work. Brochures, website links, books, lunchtime prenatal classes, access to a breastfeeding consultant, phone numbers for support groups and La Leche League contacts all help employees feel more prepared.

### For More Information

- <http://www.dhhs.nh.gov/DHHS/NHP/LIBRARY/Fact+Sheet/worksite-breastfeeding.htm>
- [www.womenshealth.gov/breastfeeding/programs/business-case/](http://www.womenshealth.gov/breastfeeding/programs/business-case/)
- <http://www.womenshealth.gov/breastfeeding/benefits/>
- “An Easy Guide to Breastfeeding” provides information and encouragement to women. It explains the benefits for baby, mom and society, and answers frequently asked questions: <http://www.womenshealth.gov/pub/bf.cfm>
- Contact Maureen Gilbert-Thibault, RN, MEd, IBCLC at [mthibault@dhhs.state.nh.us](mailto:mthibault@dhhs.state.nh.us).