

Helping managers support employees

Before leaving For Maternity Leave

Before having her baby, your employee should be made aware of the support she will have to breastfeed her child when she returns to work. The handout *Making Business Work At Work* will be made available to her prior to her leaving work to have her baby. This gives suggestions to make the transition from home to work easier for the breastfeeding mother and her employer.

Before Returning To Work

Closer to the date she will be returning to work, a plan can be made to incorporate breastfeeding into her workday. This plan will be specific to the mother, the baby, and the job. This plan may also change as a result of factors such as increased needs of the baby. For example, babies experience predictable growth spurts during which their breastmilk needs will be greater. When this occurs, more frequent breastfeeding or pumping will be necessary for 2-3 days.

The Keys To A Successful Plan Include:

Space: Often a small, clean area with a comfortable chair is all that is needed. If your employee is pumping her breastmilk, an electrical outlet may be necessary. Electric pumps are the most efficient way to express milk and a mother may decide to use one to pump at work. A refrigerator should be accessible to store the breastmilk until the employee finishes her workday. If a refrigerator is not possible, a cooler with ice packs can be used.

Time: In most cases, breastfeeding or pumping can be incorporated into regular breaks throughout the workday. The time required will vary according to the mother and baby support. Sit down and talk to your employee before she returns to work. This will allow the opportunity to develop a plan that is workable for everyone involved and can result in a win-win situation. Information should be made available to other employees so they can effectively support their breastfeeding co-worker.

As The Employer

It is important for you to provide an open line of communication. It may be difficult for your employee to ask you for what she needs, and it may be difficult for you to know what she needs. Effective communication is required for the transition of combining breastfeeding and employment to be successful. This can be achieved by:

- Ask your employee what she needs to make this transition easier. Ensure her of your support.
- Make your business/organizational support of breastfeeding common knowledge among all employees. Some women may feel their co-workers will resent them as, allowing women to breastfeed or pump during business hours may be perceived as special treatment by other employees who are not breastfeeding.
- Active implementation of policies and procedures can raise awareness to other employees and make the breastfeeding employee more comfortable.
- Show your support to non-breastfeeding employees and their families. Provide a bulletin board for employees to post pictures and/or accomplishments of their own family members or include them in a departmental newsletter.
- Consult the necessary resources for help. *Make Breastfeeding Your Business: An Action Support Kit* (Frittenburg S, 2009) is available online at www.gov.ns.ca/hpp/publications/breastfeeding_support_kit.pdf

If You Have Any Questions Please Contact Us At Public Health Services: 736-7957

