



# SUPPORTING NURSING MOMS AT WORK

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# SOLUTIONS FOR HOTELS

A FACT SHEET FROM THE OFFICE ON WOMEN'S HEALTH

Supporting nursing women can work, especially in hotel settings where a variety of space solutions exist for all levels of staff. Hotels across the country have found many creative solutions to provide employees simple, flexible space and time to express milk at work. These solutions are inexpensive and easy to put into place. Best of all, they are highly valued by employees and help improve overall employee productivity and morale.

### Bottom-Line Benefits to Business

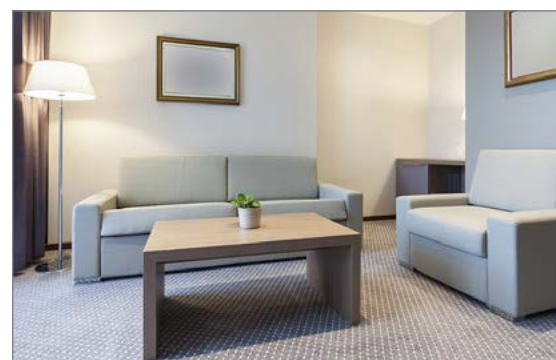
Support for employees who are nursing their children is a valued employee benefit. It is also good for the company's bottom line, yielding a **3 to 1 Return on Investment**<sup>1</sup> due to:

- ▶ Lower absenteeism rates of both mothers and fathers (since breastfed babies are healthier)<sup>2</sup>
- ▶ Higher retention rates (94% among employers who support nursing moms vs. national average of 59%)<sup>3</sup>
- ▶ Lower health care costs and insurance claims when infants are breastfed<sup>4</sup>
- ▶ Higher productivity and loyalty among workers<sup>5</sup>

### ACA Requirements

Section 7 of the Fair Labor Standards Act has been amended to provide for basic accommodations for nursing women during the work period, including:

- ▶ Reasonable time to express milk during the work day
- ▶ Private space that is not a bathroom



The law applies to businesses of all sizes, and creative solutions abound. Learn more at the U.S. Department of Labor at [www.dol.gov/whd/nursingmothers](http://www.dol.gov/whd/nursingmothers).

### Simple Space Solutions

Nursing women require a private area to express milk. The space does not have to be a designated room, and only a small area is needed (a minimum of 4' x 5'). The space should be functional for expressing milk with a chair and





a flat surface for the employee's breast pump. Access to an electrical outlet is essential, along with nearby access to a sink for washing hands and breast pump parts. This makes vacant guest rooms an ideal solution in a hotel. Other flexible options include:

- ▶ Vacant conference or hospitality rooms
- ▶ The manager's office (lock personnel files and cover surveillance cameras)
- ▶ Clean storage area
- ▶ Employee break area

If a locked door is not possible with the space provided, signage and a well communicated policy helps protect the privacy of the employee.

### Time Solutions

Most women use their usual breaks and meal periods at work to express milk. Creative scheduling often helps adjust for employee breaks. When front desk staff work alone, a manager might provide coverage when the employee needs to take a break to express milk. Another option is to ask the employee's child care provider to bring the baby to the mother at work to directly feed her baby.

### Storing Expressed Milk

Human milk can be stored in a variety of ways, including a small refrigerator commonly used in hotel guest rooms, or a larger refrigerator used by employees to store personal food and meals. An employee can also store her expressed milk in a small personal cooler or insulated bag.

### Other Considerations

A written policy helps assure that all levels of staff have equal access to support, and that the needs of nursing moms will be respected. Include benefits of the company's support as part of new employee orientation so all employees will be aware of the company's policy. Many hotels also provide milk expression space for breastfeeding guests attending an event at the hotel. Some hotels have also made their space available for nursing women who work in small businesses in their area.



## Learn More!

Hotels across the country have found many other creative solutions for supporting nursing women at work. To learn more, check the online searchable resource, *Supporting Nursing Moms at Work: Employer Solutions* at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Service, Office on Women's Health at [www.womenshealth.gov/breastfeeding-at-work](http://www.womenshealth.gov/breastfeeding-at-work).

<sup>1</sup>Washington Business Group on Health. Breastfeeding support at the workplace. Washington, D.C.; 2000. Issue No. 2.

<sup>2</sup>Cohen R, Martek MB, Mrtek RG. Comparison of maternal absenteeism and infant illness rates among breastfeeding and formula-feeding wom absenteeism and infant illness rates among breastfeeding and formula-feeding women in two corporations. *Am J of Health Prom*; 1995. 10(2):148-153.

<sup>3</sup>Ortiz J, et al. Duration of breast milk expression among working mothers enrolled in an employer-sponsored lactation program. *Ped Nursing*; 2004. 30(2):111-119.

<sup>4</sup>Mutual of Omaha. Prenatal and lactation education reduces newborn health care costs. Omaha, NE: Mutual of Omaha; 2001.

<sup>5</sup>Galtry J. Lactation and the labor market: breastfeeding, labor market changes, and public policy in the United States. *Health Care Women Int*; 1997. 18:467-480.