



SUPPORTING NURSING MOMS AT WORK

SOLUTIONS FOR RETAIL STORES

A FACT SHEET FROM THE OFFICE ON WOMEN'S HEALTH

Retail stores with limited space and rigid schedules can support nursing women at work. Malls, large discount stores, and small retail operations have all found a variety of creative solutions to give employees the flexible space and time they need to express milk at work. These solutions can be inexpensive and easy to put into place. They are also highly valued by employees and help improve 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**¹ due to:

- ▶ Lower absenteeism rates of both mothers and fathers (since breastfed babies are healthier)²

- ▶ Higher retention rates (94% among employers who support nursing moms vs. national average of 59%)³
- ▶ Lower health care costs and insurance claims when infants are breastfed⁴
- ▶ Higher productivity and loyalty among workers⁵

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.



Simple Space Solutions

Simple Space Solutions Nursing women require a private area to express milk. The space does not have to be a designated room. 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.



Retail stores have used a wide variety of flexible options, such as:

- ▶ Converted dressing room
- ▶ The manager's office (lock personnel files and cover surveillance cameras)
- ▶ Clean storage area
- ▶ Employee break area

Large malls and shopping centers might consider establishing a small lactation space in the mall that can be shared by all of the employees working in the mall. Some businesses also open their space to customers who need a private area to breastfeed.



Access to an electrical outlet is essential. Provide privacy with signage and a well communicated policy if a locked door is not possible. For very small retail stores where space is limited, consider allowing women to bring their infant in arms to work for the first few months, or sharing space with a nearby business.

Time Solutions

Most women use their usual breaks and meal periods at work to express milk. Many nursing moms express milk during “down” times, when possible. Creative scheduling often helps adjust for employee

breaks. Coverage can be provided by managers or floaters when the employee needs to take a break to express milk. Some retail stores allow 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 the employee refrigerator, a small hotel room sized refrigerator, the employee's own personal cooler or insulated lunch 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 retail stores also extend the breastfeeding support to customers shopping in the store as a valued consumer benefit.

Learn More!

Retail stores 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.

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

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

³ 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.

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

⁵ 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.