

SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES FOR SUPPORTING WORKING MOTHERS

HELP MOTHERS SUCCEED BY CREATING A POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT THAT WOMEN NEED TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN COMBINING EMPLOYMENT WITH BREASTFEEDING.

1. A place to express milk in privacy.

An employee can express milk efficiently using a quality electric breast pump as long as she is in a safe, clean location. Being able to express milk in a comfortable, private place helps release the hormones necessary for milk to flow. A designated space within the worksite for a lactation room is one of the health benefits most valued by breastfeeding employees.

2. Flexible breaks and work options.

Women usually need to express milk every two to three hours (three times during a typical eight-hour work period). Each milk expression time takes around 15 minutes plus time to get to and from the lactation room. Normal paid break times are usually sufficient for women to express milk; in some situations, any extra time needed can be made up before or after work.

3. Education.

Planning ahead can make the difference. First time mothers, in particular, cannot fully anticipate the type of breastfeeding support needed when they return to work, and human resource staff at the company plays a critical role in helping them anticipate their needs for managing working and breastfeeding. Options include prenatal “lunch and learn” classes for pregnant employees and their partners and family members, prenatal education packets, online education through the company web site, or a library of breastfeeding and parenting resources. A “return to work” class or consultation also helps mothers, father, and family members feel better prepared when they return to work by providing them with specific strategies that will be useful in their situation.

4. Support.

A positive, accepting attitude from both supervisors and co-workers helps breastfeeding employees feel good about their decision to continue breastfeeding after returning to work. Having access to a lactation consultant through a corporate program or in the community also provides the important technical support needed to deal with the initial and ongoing challenges of breastfeeding.

