



RESPONDING TO COMMON CONCERNS

Learn how to respond to these common concerns:

1. What is the big deal about breastfeeding?
2. Our company just doesn't have the budget/can't afford to implement this policy.
3. Even if we had the money, we don't have the space for the program.
4. What will I tell my employees who think it is unfair that they don't get the same amount of break time?
5. How am I supposed to accommodate so many breaks for an employee in one day?

Issue: What is the big deal about breastfeeding?

Response

Breastfeeding is a public health imperative.

Supporting Points

- The United States Surgeon General recognized the need to increase breastfeeding as a priority and has initiated a call to action for the nation, including employers.
- The American Academy of Pediatrics and all major health organizations recommend that all children, with rare exception, be breastfed exclusively until age 6 months, with continued breastfeeding through the first year of life and beyond.
- Infants who are not breastfed are at excess risk for sudden infant death syndrome, childhood diseases such as ear infections, gastroenteritis, and hospitalization for respiratory infection as well as chronic conditions such as asthma, diabetes, leukemia, and obesity.
- Mothers who breastfeed are at reduced risk for metabolic syndrome, type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, breast and ovarian cancer, and other poor health outcomes.
- The health benefits to both mother and baby continue beyond the time spent breastfeeding.
- Many mothers are hesitant to talk about their need for worksite lactation support. Lack of requests for breastfeeding assistance (by employees of their employers) does not indicate that a substantial need does not exist.

Issue: Our company just doesn't have the budget/can't afford to implement this policy.

Response

Comprehensive lactation support policies are worth the investment.

Supporting Points

- Your company can't afford NOT to implement a lactation support program.
- The fastest growing segment of women in the workforce is women with children under age 3. If you alienate this group, you can significantly deplete the pool from which you draw your workforce.
- Costs are minimal. Little is required to establish a policy, environment, and program of support.
- Lactation programs have a proven return on investment. For every \$1 invested, there is a return of up to \$3. The more comprehensive the program, the greater the return on investment. Any immediate costs can be offset in the longer term with improved retention rates, lower absenteeism costs, increased loyalty, employee productivity, reduced health-care expenses, and positive public relations.

Issue: Even if we had the money, we don't have the space for the program.

Response

The program space requirements are written to be adaptable to most work environments.

Supporting Points:

- A reasonable and practical solution can be found in almost any work setting.
- A dedicated breastfeeding room may be as small as 5 ft. by 5 ft.
- The space cannot be a bathroom. Some allowable alternatives to a dedicated space include:
 - Employee's own office.
 - Use of an existing meeting room, unused office, relaxation room, or other multi-use room. A lockable door and sign-up sheet will allow for privacy and operations planning.
 - A quiet, curtained or otherwise screened/sectioned-off area of the workplace.
 - A space created by another organization that will allow use by your employees.
 - A previous annex of a bathroom that has been permanently modified as a separate space.



Issue: What will I tell my employees who think it is unfair that they don't get the same amount of break time?

Response

Senior management's support of breastfeeding will greatly assist acceptance within the rest of the workforce.

Supporting Points

- Remind them that worksite lactation support and increased breastfeeding result in lower turnover and reduced absenteeism by male and female employees and that fewer childhood illnesses means fewer germs in the workplace. These benefits translate to a more productive workforce and a more evenly distributed workload for each individual employee.
- Remind them that breastfeeding accommodations are only temporary.
- Remind them that they or any coworker would be entitled to the same benefit if they were in similar need of worksite lactation support.
- Staff who are uncomfortable with the concept of breastfeeding may need education to recognize that feeding a child in the healthiest way possible is a positive behavior that needs reinforcement.

Issue: How am I supposed to accommodate so many breaks for an employee in one day?

Response

Breastfeeding employees' needs are relatively simple, and evidence shows that their need for flexible scheduling is cost-effective.

Supporting Points

- The need for flexible scheduling is temporary and will lessen as the child grows older. The "Reasonable Break Time for Nursing Mothers" provision of the Fair Labor Standards Act covers non-exempt employees for the first year after a baby's birth. Frequency of milk-expression breaks tends to lessen as infants grow and solid foods are introduced.
- Typical break needs are 20 to 30 minutes every two to three hours. Many women can meet their needs by flexibly combining existing break time (e.g., combining two 15-minute paid rest breaks and splitting a one-hour unpaid meal break into two 30-minute breaks).
- The employer and employee can work together to identify a milk-expression schedule to match both a mother's physical needs and workflow demands.

- Any extra time required outside of regular breaks can be added to the employee's regular work hours, if needed.
- A strategically placed space for milk expression can cut down on travel and return time, minimizing the need for coverage by another employee or time away from the employee's work area. If arrangements allow a woman to continue working while expressing milk, no additional break time is needed.
- Discussing options before your employee takes maternity leave assures there is time to adequately plan for temporary changes in scheduling/operations.