



WORKSITE LACTATION SUPPORT IN TEXAS

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

(PUBLIC HEALTH PROFESSIONAL)

1. Why is it important for businesses to support breastfeeding employees?

To remain competitive and attract the best employees, employers must provide benefits that best address the needs and concerns of employees and their families. Working mothers are the fastest growing segment of the workforce, so employers must find ways to meet their needs in order to recruit and retain them. While the majority of working mothers start out breastfeeding their infants, most stop soon after returning to the job. Lack of employer support is often cited as a key factor in this decision.

2. How does breastfeeding benefit infants?

The American Academy of Pediatrics notes that “Human milk is species-specific, and all substitute feeding preparations differ markedly from it, making human milk uniquely superior for infant feeding,” and that “Exclusive breastfeeding is the reference or normative model against which all alternative feeding methods must be measured with regard to growth, health, development, and all other short- and long-term outcomes.” In addition to optimal nutrition, breastmilk contains antibodies and other immune factors that promote growth and help protect infants from both common and rare childhood illnesses. Many of the protective effects, gained by breastfeeding according to medical recommendations, last throughout childhood and into adulthood. For example, adults who were breastfed as babies often have lower rates of obesity and type 2 diabetes.

3. How does breastfeeding benefit mothers?

For mothers, breastfeeding reduces risk of type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, rheumatoid arthritis, breast and ovarian cancer, and other poor health outcomes. It releases hormones that relax the mother and provides a special bond between the mother and her child.

4. What’s the difference between formula and breastmilk?

Infant formulas are cow- or soy-milk-based liquids or reconstituted powders fed to infants and young children to serve as nutritional substitutes for human milk. All infant formulas marketed in the United States must meet the nutrient specifications listed in Food and Drug Administration regulations and contain the basic ingredients required to support infant growth. Breastmilk also contains these basic ingredients, but they are delivered in a form and amount that is specific to the digestion and metabolism of human infants. In addition, breastmilk contains more than



100 ingredients—including live antibodies, hormones, anti-viruses, anti-allergens anti-parasites, growth factors, enzymes, trace minerals, and more—that are not found in formula and that contribute to optimal infant health, growth, and development.

5. How long should an infant be breastfed?

The American Academy of Pediatrics and all other health authorities recommend exclusive breastfeeding—meaning that the infant receives no food or liquid other than breastmilk—for about the first six months of life, followed by continued breastfeeding along with the introduction of other foods through the first year of life and beyond. Infants who are not fed according to these recommendations are at increased risk for common childhood illnesses such as ear and gastrointestinal infections; rare but serious childhood conditions, including necrotizing enterocolitis, leukemia, severe respiratory disease, and sudden infant death syndrome; and chronic conditions, including asthma, diabetes, and obesity. A 2010 study in the journal *Pediatrics* estimated that the nation would save \$13 billion per year in health-related expenses and prevent more than 900 excess deaths if 90 percent of U.S. babies were exclusively breastfed for the first six months.

6. Why do mothers need worksite lactation support to continue breastfeeding? Can't they express and store breastmilk during the time that they are at home?

During the early weeks after giving birth, a woman's baby and her body work together to establish a milk supply and breastfeeding pattern designed to meet the baby's physical and developmental needs. A woman's body responds to the rhythms of her baby's eating patterns, and maintenance of her milk supply depends on feeding her baby or expressing her breastmilk in coordination with these regular patterns. When a woman is separated from her baby for more than a few hours, she must express her milk. Missing even one pumping session can have undesirable effects, including discomfort, leaking, inflammation, infection, and decreased milk production, and eventually, her body will stop producing milk.

7. What is the Texas Mother-Friendly Worksite program?

The Texas Mother-Friendly Worksite program, administered by the Texas Department of State Health Services, recognizes Texas employers who provide flexible scheduling, space, and support for employees who choose to breastfeed their infants so that they can express and store breastmilk during the workday. The program is voluntary, but businesses must apply in order to become designated as a Texas Mother-Friendly Worksite. Information on how to apply for the designation can be found at www.TexasMotherFriendly.org.



8. What are the benefits of a being a Texas Mother-Friendly Worksite?

The benefits of developing a worksite lactation support program include:

- Reduced turnover.
- Lower recruitment and training costs.
- Lower absenteeism due to a sick child.
- Higher morale among employees.
- Enhanced loyalty among employees.
- Increased productivity among employees with young children.
- Enticing recruitment incentive.
- Improved image in the community.
- Lower cost health insurance and fewer claims.

9. How do employers qualify to become a Texas Mother-Friendly Worksite?

To obtain the Texas Mother-Friendly Worksite designation, employers can fill out an online application at www.TexasMotherFriendly.org. They need to have a written lactation support policy in place that at a minimum:

- Offers flexible work schedules that allow time for the expression of breastmilk.
- Provides access to a private space(s), other than a bathroom, for the purpose of breastmilk expression.
- Provides access to a nearby clean and safe water source and a sink for washing hands and rinsing out any breast pump equipment.
- Provides hygienic storage alternatives for the mother to safely store her breastmilk, such as access to a refrigerator or a personal cooler with ice pack.



10. What does the law say about working and breastfeeding?

Texas law “recognizes a mother’s responsibility to both her job and her child when she returns to work and acknowledges that a woman’s choice to breastfeed benefits the family, the employer, and society,” and created criteria for the business designation as Mother-Friendly.

Under Section 7 of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), federal law requires employers to provide “reasonable break time for an employee to express breastmilk for her nursing child for one year after the child’s birth each time such employee has need to express the milk.” Employers are also required to provide “a place, other than a bathroom, that is shielded from view and free from intrusion from coworkers and the public, which may be used by an employee to express breast milk.”

11. What other laws about breastfeeding should businesses know about?

Texas law states that, “A mother is entitled to breastfeed her baby in any location in which the mother is authorized to be.” Many businesses consider developing a public breastfeeding policy, and training their staff, to assure that patrons are supported to breastfeed in any location within the establishment where the patron is authorized to be.

12. What resources are available to breastfeeding mothers?

The Texas Department of State Health Services offers a wide variety of resources to breastfeeding mothers and their families. These include breastfeeding tips, suggestions for talking to employers about pumping breastmilk at work, links to support groups, details on state and federal laws regarding breastfeeding, and answers to commonly asked questions about breastfeeding. These resources can be found at www.TexasMotherFriendly.org and www.breastmilkcounts.com.