LACTATION SUPPORT REQUIRES FEW RESOURCES

Companies both large and small benefit from providing a lactation support program. When the following simple, cost-effective components are provided employees enjoy the biggest savings.

1. Privacy to Express Milk
   If women do not work in a private office, a small, private space (as small as 4’ x 5’) can be set up for a lactation room. A woman produces milk on a constant basis (see page 6 of Easy Steps to Supporting Breastfeeding Employees). This means the woman must express milk approximately every 3 hours to maintain a healthy milk supply and reduce uncomfortable fullness while separated from her infant. Milk can be refrigerated or stored in a personal cooler to provide to the baby later. Many companies also provide a hospital grade electric breast pump that makes pumping quicker and more efficient (see Easy Steps to Supporting Breastfeeding Employees to learn more about accessing quality breast pumps).

   Employees should never be asked to express milk or breastfeed in a restroom. Breast milk is food, and restrooms are an unhygienic place to prepare food. In addition, electrical outlets are usually unavailable and it is difficult and uncomfortable managing breast pump equipment in a toilet stall.

2. Flexible Breaks
   Each milk expression session usually takes around 15 minutes plus time to get to and from the lactation room. Breastfeeding employees typically need no more than an hour per work day to express milk, which can easily be divided between usual paid breaks and the meal period. If milk expression takes longer than expected, a common solution is to allow employees the flexibility to come in early or stay late, or to use a portion of their lunch period, to make up time.

3. Education
   Employees value information they receive during their pregnancy about continuing to breastfeed upon returning to work. Pamphlets, resources, lunchtime prenatal classes, and access to a lactation consultant can help employees feel more prepared (see the Resource Guide section of the Tool Kit).

4. Support
   Supportive policies and practices that enable women to successfully return to work and breastfeed send a message to all employees that breastfeeding is valued. The company gains, too, with fewer sick days for employees. I breastfed my little girl for a year, and never felt like I was asking a lot, but we get so much in return! I cannot even imagine being able to continue breastfeeding without the warm, friendly environment that helps me learn how much my ‘baby’ needs.

   Providing support is a temporary need for each breastfeeding employee. Once babies begin using solid foods at 6 months, milk expression requirements gradually diminish.

Companies that Support Breastfeeding Employees

Many companies provide designated space for breastfeeding employees to express milk, and supportive policies to help them reach their breastfeeding goals. Some of these companies employ significant numbers of women and some do not. Examples of large, mid-sized, and small companies and public agencies with supportive lactation programs include:

**Large Businesses and Public Agencies (500 or more Employees)**
- Bank of America and
- Madison Army Medical Center
- Boston University Medical Center
- California Public Health Foundation Enterprise
- City of Milwaukee
- Texas Instruments
- Home Depot

**Mid-Sized Businesses (100-499 Employees)**
- Crittenton
- Sealess Roebuck & Co. #3179

**Small Businesses (1-99 Employees)**
- Andalucia Health Center (Oregon)
- Children’s Health Associates of Salem (Oregon)
- HCG Software, LLC (Oregon)
- Pecan Ridge School (Texas)
- Western Environmental Law Center

If only employers knew how much a supportive environment means. Nursing moms don’t need much—a private place, time to pump, and someone who can answer your questions. It’s not asking a lot, but we get so much in return! I cannot even imagine being able to continue breastfeeding without the warm, friendly environment that helps me learn how much my ‘baby’ needs. I think my employer pains, too, with fewer sick days for employees. I breastfed my little girl for a year, and never took a single day of sick leave!"

Gini Wilczewski
Manager, Media Relations
Boston Medical Center

**References**

Companies successful at retaining valued employees after childbirth find that two components can make the difference: providing dedicated space (as small as 4’ x 5’) for breastfeeding employees to express milk in privacy, and providing worksite lactation support. The proof is significant: more satisfied, loyal employees and cost savings to the business. These savings are seen in such areas as:

- Retention of experienced employees;
- Reduction in sick time taken by both moms and dads for children’s illnesses; and
- Lower health care and insurance costs.

This booklet provides business executives and managers, as well as human resource managers, with the business case for breastfeeding…how supporting breastfeeding employees contributes to their company’s return on investment (ROI).

Supporting your breastfeeding employees saves money. Here’s how.

### Business Savings

- The insurance company CGNIA conducted a 2-year study of 343 employees who participated in their lactation support program, and found that the program resulted in an annual savings of $240,000 in health care expenses, 62 percent fewer prescriptions, and $60,000 savings in reduced absenteeism rates.

### 3. Investing in a worksite lactation support program can yield substantial dividends to the company

Companies of all types have found that implementing a lactation support program can have a positive impact on their bottom line. Just a few of these important dividends include lower turnover rates, additional health care savings, higher productivity and loyalty, and positive public relations.

#### Lower Turnover Rates

Employees are more likely to return to work after childbirth when their workplace provides a supportive environment for continued breastfeeding. Being able to keep experienced employees after childbirth means lowering or eliminating the costs a company otherwise would incur to hire temporary staff or to recruit, hire, and train replacement staff, both of which involve additional lost revenue while getting these new staff up to speed.

#### Business Savings

- Mutual of Omaha found that health care costs for newborns are three times lower for babies whose mothers participate in their company’s maternity and lactation program. Per person health care costs were $2,146 more for employees who did not participate in the program, with a yearly savings of $111,881 in health care claims for the breastfeeding mothers and babies.

### Additional Health Care Savings

- A New Zealand study estimated $75,000 in savings for each employee who returns to work after childbirth.
- Employees whose companies provide breastfeeding support consistently report improved morale, better satisfaction with their jobs, and higher productivity. They also feel the support eases their transition back to work and enables them to return from maternity leave sooner.

### Profits and People

Today, women with children are the fastest growing segment of the workforce. Nearly 85 percent of women with children under the age of 3 are employed. In the United States, more than 70 percent of all new mothers today choose to breastfeed to give their babies important nutrition and health benefits. Family-friendly policies and programs that provide lactation support for both female employees and partners of male employees enhance your employee health benefits package and help protect your company’s investment in staff through better retention of valued employees.

![Retention Rate for Employees of Companies with Lactation Support Programs](image)

**Retention Rate for Employees of Companies with Lactation Support Programs**

- **Companies with Lactation Support Programs:** 94.2%
- **National Average:** 69.4%

![Percentage of Infant Illnesses Requiring 1-Day Maternal Absence from Work](image)

**Percentage of Infant Illnesses Requiring 1-Day Maternal Absence from Work**

- **Mothers of Breastfed Infants:** 25%
- **Mothers of Formula Fed Infants:** 75%

![Business Case for Breastfeeding](image)

**The Business Case for Breastfeeding**

- Mothers and fathers of breastfed infants typically spend more time at work in childcare settings where they are exposed to a multitude of germs and viruses, human milk provides savings to the business. These savings are seen in such areas as:
- Lower health care and insurance costs.
- The payoff is significant: more satisfied, loyal employees and cost savings to the business.

- **Breastfeeding lowers health care costs**
  - The reduced health care costs for breastfed infants translate into lower medical insurance claims for businesses. Babies who are not breastfed visit the physician more often, spend more days in the hospital, and require more prescriptions than breastfed infants. One study found that for every 1,000 babies not breastfed, there were 2,025 extra physician visits, 212 extra hospitalization days, and 609 extra prescriptions for three illnesses alone—eust, respiratory, and gastrointestinal infections. This does not include the risks of numerous other childhood diseases and infections, or women’s diseases such as pre-menopausal breast cancer, which are reduced when a mother breastfeeds.

- **Higher Productivity and Loyalty**

  - Another study of several companies with lactation programs showed a retention rate of 94.2 percent.6 Mutual of Omaha’s lactation support program led to a retention rate of 83 percent of their maternity workforce compared to the national average of only 59 percent.5 The insurance company CIGNA conducted a 2-year study of 343 employees who participated in their lactation support program, and found that the program resulted in an annual savings of $240,000 in health care expenses, 62 percent fewer prescriptions, and $60,000 savings in reduced absenteeism rates.

- **Positive Public Relations**

  - Providing a supportive environment for breastfeeding employees improves your overall company image and enhances your ability to recruit top-notch staff. Many companies with support programs receive local, state, and national recognition and media attention, a positive boost to recruitment efforts and general goodwill in the community.

- **Power** found that a lactation support program for mothers, fathers, and partners of male employees made a dramatic difference in reducing turnover and absenteeism rates for both male and female workers. They also found that 83 percent of employees were more positive about the company as a result of the program, and 67 percent intended to make it their long-term employer.7

- **Profits and People**

  - Nearly 85 percent of women with children under the age of 3 are employed. In the United States, more than 70 percent of all new mothers today choose to breastfeed to give their babies important nutrition and health benefits.8 Family-friendly policies and programs that provide lactation support for both female employees and partners of male employees enhance your employee health benefits package and help protect your company’s investment in staff through better retention of valued employees.