



# SUPPORTING NURSING MOMS AT WORK

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# SOLUTIONS FOR RESTAURANTS

A FACT SHEET FROM THE OFFICE ON WOMEN'S HEALTH

Supporting nursing women works, even in small businesses such as restaurants with limited space and rigid schedules. Restaurants across the country have found many creative solutions to provide employees simple, flexible space and time to express milk at work. These solutions are inexpensive and easy to put into place. Best of all, they are highly valued by employees and help improve overall 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**<sup>1</sup> due to:

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

- ▶ Higher retention rates (94% among employers who support nursing moms vs. national average of 59%)<sup>3</sup>
- ▶ Lower health care costs and insurance claims when infants are breastfed<sup>4</sup>
- ▶ Higher productivity and loyalty among workers<sup>5</sup>

### 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](http://www.dol.gov/whd/nursingmothers).



### Simple Space Solutions

Nursing women require a private area to express milk. The space does not have to be a designated room, and 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 breast pump.

Restaurants use many flexible options such as:

- ▶ A storage room/area
- ▶ The manager's office (lock personnel files and cover surveillance cameras)
- ▶ Small enclosed area created with an inexpensive partition or screen

Access to an electrical outlet is essential. Provide privacy with signage and a well communicated policy if a locked door is not possible. Some managers make arrangements for nursing women to share space with a nearby business.

## Time Solutions

Most women use their usual breaks and meal periods at work to express milk. Creative scheduling often helps adjust for these breaks, and coverage can be provided by managers or floaters. Some restaurants allow nursing women to work a “split shift” schedule during the busy meal periods, and go home or to the childcare provider to feed their baby between shifts. Other nursing moms express milk during the “down” times between meals periods. Some restaurants allow the child care



provider to bring the baby to the mother at work to directly feed the baby when needed.

## Storing Expressed Milk

It is not necessary to store human milk in a refrigerator with customer food. Employees can store their expressed milk in a small personal cooler or insulated bag.

## Other Considerations

Some restaurants have a written policy to assure that all nursing women have equal access to support and to set expectations for respecting the privacy of nursing moms. Consider including benefits of the company's support as part of new employee orientation.

## Learn More!

Restaurants 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](http://www.womenshealth.gov/breastfeeding-at-work).