

Establish Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace

The Employee's Guide



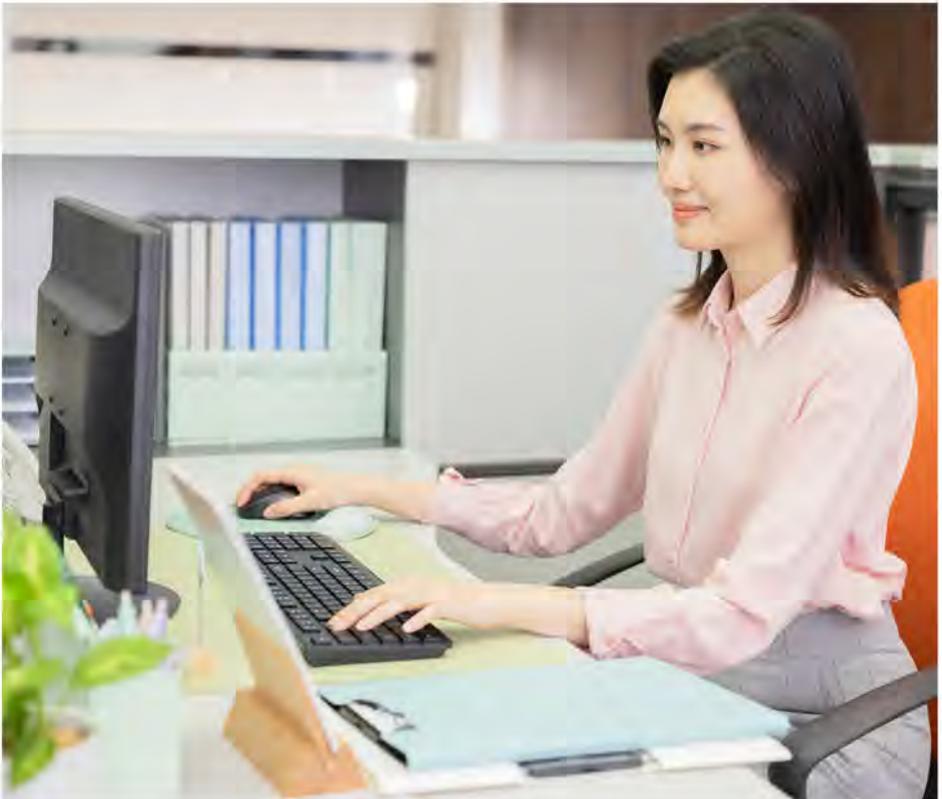
Department of Health



Online version

Combine Breastfeeding and Work

Breastfeeding confers many benefits. The longer the duration of breastfeeding, the more health benefits the mother-baby dyads could gain. As recommended by the World Health Organisation, babies should be exclusively breastfed in the first 6 months. Solid food should be introduced gradually at around 6 months old to cater for their nutritional needs. Continue to breastfeed up to 2 years old or beyond. It is a challenge for mothers to continue breastfeeding when they return to work. Nevertheless, ample preparation and good communication could make breastfeeding more compatible with work.



Be proactive to get support from supervisors and colleagues

1. Act early

Expectant employees who plan to breastfeed should discuss with their supervisors early so that preparations in the work setting can be made in advance. During the communication, employees may wish to let supervisors know about:

- ✔ the importance of breastfeeding;
- ✔ your decision of sustained breastfeeding when return to work;
- ✔ specific supportive measures to enable breastmilk expression at workplace.

2. Foster supportive culture

Appreciate the understanding from the supervisors and colleagues to support the sustained breastfeeding at work. Work out the plan which is mutually agreed earlier, including the use of lactation breaks, breastmilk expression location and storage facility. At the same time, lactating employees are encouraged to be open-minded and flexibly handle ad-hoc practical issues. Keep good communication with the supervisors and colleagues at all times.



Key points to communicate with supervisors (with given examples)

1. Be grateful to supervisors' support at work
2. Express your will to breastfeed and the importance of breastfeeding

e.g. "After speaking to health professionals, I opt for breastfeeding because breastmilk provides the best nutrition and protection to my child. Moreover, my doctor tells me that breastfeeding helps to prevent many diseases for me and my child."



3. Communicate specific needs at the workplace

e.g. "I would need the following supportive measures at the workplace to enable continued breastfeeding:

 I would need lactation breaks.

Under normal circumstances, I would need two lactation breaks, each about 30 minutes (or one break about an hour), during an eight-hour shift. I will make use of my spare time at the workplace (e.g. lunch time, the time before and after office hours) to cater my additional expression needs;

 I would need a private space for expression.

There is a seat, a table and an electric outlet for operating breast pumps. I understand a lactation room may not be available at all work settings. We could explore to use a vacant conference room temporarily or set up a curtained cubicle for breastmilk expression;

 Last, I would need refrigerating facility.

It is for the safe storage of expressed breastmilk. Generally, a refrigerator in the pantry can serve the purpose."

4. Discuss work arrangement options

e.g. "I wish to make breastfeeding compatible with work as much as possible. I want to discuss with you in working out practically feasible options that are beneficial to all involved parties at the workplace."

Lactating mothers **get prepared to work**

1. Gain support from family members

Inform the partner and other family members about the decision to breastfeed. Seek their support and cooperation. Make sure they understand the baby's hunger and satiety cues so that they could feed the baby only the rightful amount at the right time when mothers are out for work. It is important to avoid the baby being fed too full because this may discourage direct breastfeeding and in turn reducing mothers' milk supply.

2. Sustain breastfeeding to keep up with baby's needs

Direct breastfeeding in a responsive manner helps mothers produce sufficient milk for their babies. Working mothers cannot directly breastfeed and hence they require regular expressions of breastmilk at the workplace every three to four hours in order to maintain their milk supply. Working mothers could directly breastfeed their babies before leaving home for work. At the workplace, mothers regularly express breastmilk. When return home from work, mothers can continue direct breastfeeding. During the weekends and days off, mothers can directly respond and breastfeed their babies any time anywhere.





3. Practice makes perfect

Get hold of the necessary equipment for milk expression at work, for example, breast pump and its accessory items, containers for breastmilk storage, ice pack and cool box etc. About two weeks before returning to work, mothers can try practicing expression of breastmilk at home and get familiar with the use of the apparatus. Also, let the caregiver try feeding the baby with expressed breastmilk. Mothers could try gradually adjust the schedule of breastmilk expression according to the allowed lactation breaks at work. Mothers may want to save up some expressed breastmilk as reserve. In general, reserving the amount of breastmilk for babies' consumption for one day or two is considered adequate.

4. Make good use of time

Some mothers may need longer time or more frequent for expressing breastmilk at work, especially those newly returned to work and still adapting themselves. They could consider making good use of their spare time at the workplace (e.g. lunch time, the time before and after office hours) for expression. However, if mothers need to express very frequently, this may indicate some breastfeeding related conditions, such as ineffective expression or breastmilk oversupply. In that case, mothers should seek professional advice to avoid problems to sustained breastfeeding.

Family Health Service

Breastfeeding Hotline : 3618 7450



Department of Health



Health Information
on Breastfeeding



Frequently Asked Questions
about Breastfeeding



Babycare Facilities in
Government Premises



Breastfeeding Audio-
visual Resources

Family
Council



Family-friendly
Workplace

Equal
Opportunities
Commission



Let's Build a Breastfeeding-
friendly Workplace

Hong Kong
Committee
for UNICEF



#SayYesToBreastfeeding



Family Health Service