

BREASTFEEDING FUNDAMENTALS FOR EMPLOYERS – WHY THE FUSS?

Why is breastfeeding such a big deal to your employees? Your employees are increasingly aware of the overwhelming evidence indicating that human milk is the ideal source of nutrition for infants, and all substitutes, including the most “advanced” infant formula, are substantially inferior. (Even the infant formula packages say so!) Your employees’ healthcare providers are, no doubt, encouraging them to breastfeed their babies. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and myriad other health organizations recommend exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of a baby’s life, with continued breastfeeding for at least one year. Moms want the best for their babies – and it’s clear that breastmilk is best.

Breastmilk protects babies from:

Allergies	Diabetes	Gastrointestinal infections	Obesity
Asthma	Diarrhea	Heart disease	Respiratory infections
Crohn’s disease	Ear infections	Hodgkin’s disease	SIDs
Colds	Eczema	Leukemia	Vomiting
Dental problems	Flu	Multiple sclerosis	

Breastfeeding protects mothers from:

Breast Cancer	Diabetes	Ovarian cancer	Uterine cancer
Cervical Cancer	Endometrial cancer	Osteoporosis	

Why isn’t infant formula an acceptable option? Another way to look at the benefits of breastfeeding is to flip it around, in a sense, and look at the *risks of formula feeding*. Because breastfeeding is, in fact, the human norm, it is logical to look at formula feeding as an alternative and assess the risks of that alternative. A comprehensive, systematic review of more than 100 breastfeeding studies quantified the risks of NOT breastfeeding for babies and mothers in developed countries.

Babies in who are <u>NOT</u> breastfed are approximately:	Mothers who do <u>NOT</u> breastfeed are approximately:
260% more likely to suffer lower respiratory diseases	40% more likely to develop breast cancer
180% more likely to suffer gastrointestinal infections	25% more likely to develop ovarian cancer
100% more likely to have middle ear infections	
55% more likely to die from SIDs	

Why does breastfeeding warrant special accommodations in the workplace? Because breastfeeding is so important for the health of its citizens, Colorado now requires employers to accommodate nursing mothers. Your employees who are nursing need three basic things from you:

1. Break **time** for pumping – 15 minutes or so, *approximately* once every 3-4 hours
2. Private, clean **space** for pumping – a small room or curtained area will do, just not the restroom
3. **Support** of managers and co-workers – flexibility, back-up when needed, understanding

Win-win proposition – You might be thinking to yourself, “Sure, I care about healthy babies and mothers, but I also care about my company’s bottom line.” Keep in mind that employers who provide lactation support experience reduced healthcare costs, reduced absenteeism, improved productivity and employee morale, greater loyalty and retention (i.e., lower turnover), and enhanced company image in the eyes of customers, potential employees, and the community at large

Also, remember that lactation support doesn’t need to be complicated or costly. It is for a finite period of time for any given employee. It is not so different from the medical needs of other employees, such as physical therapy or insulin dependence. Lactating employees are typically very discrete about pumping and milk storage, and conscientious about meeting expectations in their work.

The Colorado Breastfeeding Coalition website, www.coloradobreastfeeding.org, provides excellent resources and creative ideas to help you accommodate your breastfeeding employees.