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Supporting breastfeeding in the workplace

A guide for employers and employees



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How to use this guide

This guide was written to support the practice of breastfeeding in South African workplaces. It contains practical information for employers and managers of big, medium and small organisations on how they can create a breastfeeding-friendly workplace.

This guide is for employees as well – read it from cover to cover and understand your rights.



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NUTRITION LOVE PROTECTION HEALTHCARE EXTRA CARE

WHY SUPPORT BREASTFEEDING IN YOUR WORKPLACE

Breastfeeding is the best option

Breastmilk is the best food for babies. It contains nutritional properties that can prevent illness and death in babies and young children. Breastmilk provides protection later on in life, as breastfed children have lower risks of non-communicable diseases such as childhood obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular diseases. Breastmilk supports and promotes brain development and better cognitive function.

The unique properties of breastmilk benefit children as they get older and throughout the course of their lives. Breastfeeding can affect health outcomes and school performance, and later, an adult's participation in the economy.[1,2]

Breastfeeding is protected and supported by the South African government

South Africa's public health policy protects, promotes and supports breastfeeding for all mothers regardless of HIV-status. This was reaffirmed in the Tshwane Declaration (2011) by the Minister of Health, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi, conferring South Africa as a breastfeeding country in the context of HIV.

HIV-positive mothers can safely breastfeed their children up to age two years as long as mothers are taking their anti-retroviral treatment as prescribed.[3]

South Africa's *Code of Good Practice on the Protection of Employees during Pregnancy and After the Birth of a Child* secures guaranteed breastfeeding breaks of 30 minutes twice per day for breastfeeding or milk expression each working day for the first six months of the child's life. Beyond six months, breastfeeding women should engage their employers to make arrangements to support breastfeeding.

In 2012, South Africa published national regulations in support of the *International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes*, called *Regulations Relating to Foodstuffs for Infants and Young Children*. The regulations are designed to remove commercial pressures from the infant feeding arena, to ensure that all parents receive independent and objective information, and to ensure that all mothers who wish to breastfeed are supported to do so.

You can read more on South African laws protecting breastfeeding on page 14.

More women make up the formal workforce than ever before

The largest increase in the labour market has been among women,[4] with the majority (4.8 million or 67%) employed in the formal, non-agriculture sector. Women make up the majority of many labour markets including domestic workers, retail, hospitality, education, and nursing. Many of these women are in their childbearing years.

A breastfeeding nation is a healthy and productive nation. Supporting breastfeeding in the workplace makes good business sense!



What are the benefits of supporting breastfeeding in the workplace for employers?

- Breastfeeding can reduce medical costs for mother and child. Based on American data, for every 1,000 babies not breastfed, there are an extra 2,033 doctors visits, 212 days in hospital and 609 prescriptions.[5]
- One-day absences to care for sick children occur more than twice as often for mothers of formula-fed infants.[6]
- A study of multiple companies with breastfeeding support programmes found an average retention rate of 94%.[7]
- Last but not least, staff satisfaction and loyalty improve when breastfeeding mothers are respected and supported in the workplace.

10 STEPS TO BECOMING A BREASTFEEDING FRIENDLY WORKPLACE

step 1

Appoint a working group to facilitate breastfeeding support in the workplace - where possible under a wellness programme. The working group should start by developing a written breastfeeding policy to be endorsed by management. There is a generic example of a breastfeeding policy on page 8. Once complete and signed, the policy should be visible to all employees.

step 2

Build awareness among staff and management about the breastfeeding policy and the breastfeeding needs of working mothers through your human resource department, staff wellness and training programme, and your labour union. You can also use all internal communication channels, such as newsletters, noticeboards, email, and intranet, to build awareness.

step 3

Identify an influential breastfeeding advocate from amongst your staff to champion the breastfeeding cause in your workplace and make it a standing item on your staff agenda.

step 4

Identify a suitable and private space for moms to breastfeed or express their breastmilk. The space will depend on your workplace's needs and demand. Ideally, a dedicated small room for the purposes of breastfeeding or expressing breastmilk should be made available. The dedicated breastfeeding room should be lockable and private, with lighting, a comfortable chair, and a plug point if moms are using electric breastmilk pumps. Breastfeeding employees should never be expected to express milk in a toilet. Toilets are unsanitary. They do not provide a place to comfortably express breastmilk. More information on breastfeeding rooms is on page 7.

step 5 **Allow flexible scheduling of work duties to support breastmilk expression during work hours;** give new mothers options for returning to work, such as working from home, part-time work, and extended maternity leave; consider providing on-site or near-site child care; and consider offering professional lactation management services and support through staff wellness programmes.

step 6 **If possible, allocate a dedicated fridge for expressed breastmilk**, as well as a dedicated hand basin. If this is not possible, employees can use personal cooler bags in the communal fridge and wet wipes.

step 7 **It would be advisable to keep record/register of how many staff use the breastfeeding room** and other services to evaluate their effectiveness, as well as the need to create more demand.

step 8 **Report on and celebrate the establishment of your breastfeeding room in your staff newsletter** or your intranet. Celebrate World Breastfeeding Week annually during August 1-7 each year (http://worldbreastfeedingweek.org).

step 9 **Evaluate the breastfeeding policy and amend when necessary.** This can be done through your company's employee wellness survey.

step 10 **Photocopy the signs on the following pages** and stick them up in a prominent place to show that you are a breastfeeding friendly workplace and to show where the breastfeeding room is.

PLEASE DO NOT DISTURB

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COME BACK IN _____ MINUTES

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BREASTFEEDING FRIENDLY WORKPLACE

SETTING UP YOUR BREASTFEEDING ROOM

The breastfeeding room can be as basic or advanced as desired based on your company resources and staff needs. You can start with a very small room with the basic requirements and expand according to the need.

BASIC REQUIREMENTS	INTERMEDIATE REQUIREMENTS	ADVANCED REQUIREMENTS
• Clean room that is lockable and private • Electrical outlet • Comfortable chair • Disinfectant wipes (mothers can provide for themselves) • Room located near a source of running water • Waste bin • Employee can store milk in a public refrigerator or personal cooler • Printed educational resources obtained from a reputable source *(refer to page 16)*	• Clean room that is lockable and private • Electrical outlet • Comfortable chair/ couch • Disinfectant wipes (mothers can provide for themselves) • Room has a washbasin with clean running water and soap • Employer-provided small refrigerator for storing milk • Waste bin • Printed educational resources obtained from a reputable source • Attractive wall hangings, floral arrangement, etc. *(refer to page 16)*	• Clean room that is lockable and private • Electrical outlet • Comfortable chair/couch • Disinfectant wipes (mothers can provide for themselves) • Room has a washbasin with clean running water and soap • Employer-provided small refrigerator for storing milk • Waste bin • Printed educational resources obtained from a reputable source • Employer-provided TV and DVD for mothers to watch breastfeeding DVD on milk expression *(refer to page 16)* • Employer-provided radio to play relaxing music • Storage lockers for essential items • Desk or table top space • Attractive wall hangings, floral arrangement, etc.

Adapted from National Business Group on Health by Center for Prevention and Health Services. Investing in Workplace Breastfeeding Programs and Policies (An Employers Toolkit)

TEMPLATE OF A WORKPLACE BREASTFEEDING POLICY

Breastfeeding friendly workplaces need a breastfeeding policy endorsed by management. Use the breastfeeding policy template below as is, or as a guide to develop something suitable for your workplace's needs. In either instance, remember to circulate the complete and signed policy widely amongst staff using all internal communication channels available: email, noticeboards, intranet, newsletters, workers unions, wellness programmes, etc.

Workplace breastfeeding policy for *[insert Business / Company / Workplace Name]*

Background

(insert workplace name) recognises that breastmilk is the recommended ideal, most healthful, natural and economic food for healthy growth and development of infants and young children. Our policy is to support the needs of breastfeeding mothers when they return to work.

(insert workplace name) therefore promotes and supports breastfeeding and the expression of breastmilk by employees who are breastfeeding.

Purpose

To provide a guideline to supervisors and managers with regard to employees who choose to breastfeed or express breastmilk for their babies.

Scope

The provisions contained in this policy are applicable to employees who return from maternity leave as well as new appointees who are breastfeeding at the time of appointment.

Legislative framework

- *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, No 108 of 1996*
- *Labour Relations Act, No 66 of 1995 as amended*
- *Basic Conditions of Employment Act, No 75 of 1997*
- *Employee Equity Act, No 55 of 1998*
- *Code of Good Practice on the Protection of Employees during pregnancy and after the birth of a child as per the regulation Gazette No 6342 of 1998, issued in terms of the Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997*

Arrangements

1. *On return from maternity leave, the employee will inform the direct supervisor that she is breastfeeding.*
2. *The supervisor, in conjunction with the manager, will ensure that reasonable provision is made within the workplace to accommodate female employees who request to breastfeed or express breastmilk.*

3. *Employees can request and be granted reasonable time-off to breastfeed her baby or for expressing breastmilk.*
4. *Such time-off will not be regarded as vacation leave, but a record must be kept as part of the regular attendance management system of the institution.*
5. *Arrangements should be made for employees to have breaks of 30 minutes twice per day for breastfeeding or milk expression each working day for the first six months of the child's life, over and above normal breaks. Beyond six months, breastfeeding women should engage their employers to make arrangements to support breastfeeding.*
6. *Operational requirements must be considered at all times as discussed by the employee and supervisor.*
7. *In cases where abuse of time is suspected, the employer may investigate and take action according to company policy.*

Space and facilities

It is recognised that bathroom facilities are not appropriate for women to breastfeed or express breastmilk.

The following will be provided for breastfeeding and/or expressing of breastmilk:

- *A clean, comfortable and private space at or near the workplace*
- *Appropriate signage (i.e.: "ROOM IN USE") to ensure privacy*
- *Comfortable chair with supportive arms - for breastfeeding*
- *Small table and chair for expressing breastmilk*
- *In case that an electrical breast pump is used accessible electrical outlets will be needed.*
- *Baby changing station or table with a means to hygienically clean area*
- *Proximity to washing facilities with a clean, safe water source for hand washing and rinsing out breast pump equipment*
- *A small refrigerator or space in a refrigerator for safe storage of breastmilk. Alternatively, the employee can provide her own cooler bag with ice packs for the storage of breastmilk.*

Breastfeeding women will provide their own containers for the expression and storage of breastmilk in the refrigerator. The breastmilk containers will be clearly labelled by the mother with a name and date.

Promotion and communication of policy

This policy will be communicated to all staff of _____ *(insert workplace name)* _____ *and will be reiterated to female employees commencing maternity leave. The policy will also be included in the new employee's orientation programme.*

Further information

For further information or assistance in relation to this policy please contact:

_____ *(insert name and contact details of contact person)* _____

Authority _____ **[Approved by]** _____

[Date approved] _____ **[Last reviewed]** _____

EXPRESSING AND STORAGE OF BREASTMILK IN THE WORKPLACE

Many mothers are choosing to continue breastfeeding after they return to work by direct feeding when they are with their baby, and expressing breastmilk for when they are away from their baby. Direct feeding before and after work, during the night, and weekends is a great way to help keep breastmilk supply going and to bond with your baby.

At work, there are two ways that a mother can express breastmilk: hand expression, which is a great skill to know, and using a manual or electric breast pump.

Direct feeding before and after work, during the night, and weekends is a great way to help keep breastmilk supply going and to bond with your baby.

How to express by hand

1. Wash your hands and have a clean collection container with wide mouth ready to collect your milk.



2. Before you start, spend some time gently massaging your breasts with your hands. You can use a warm cloth to add some heat which can help.
3. Make yourself comfortable in an upright position while leaning forward slightly.
4. Hold the container near your breast under nipple and areola.
5. When you are ready to start, place your thumb on the top of your breast and your fingers below the breast about 4 cm from the nipple on the areola (darker ring around your nipple).
6. Apply steady pressure into the breast toward the chest wall, repeat a few times. If no milk comes out move your finger closer or further away from the nipple and repeat the pressure.
7. Apply a steady pressure towards the chest wall and not the nipple. Your milk will be in the breast and not in the nipple.

8. As you apply the pressure the pads of the thumb and finger move toward each other pushing in and not pulling towards the nipple. Find a good rhythm of compression and relax similar to your baby's suck pattern.

9. Alternate between breasts every few minutes (about 5 times per breast), rotate your fingers around the nipple so that all areas of your breast have been expressed and feel soft. This should take about 20-30 minutes.

10. Do not feel discouraged about the amount that you are able to express. It may only be a few drops when you start but it will increase as you become comfortable and skilled in hand expressing.



You may find these resources on hand expression of breastmilk useful

https://globalhealthmedia.org/videos/breastfeeding/
https://youtu.be/6ZViuYKX5LU
https://100percentbreastfed.co.za/

Building up breastmilk supplies

A good time to start your frozen expressed breastmilk reserve is around one to two months before you go back to work. This is long enough to get over the anxiety of going back to work, to learn the skill of expressing breastmilk at home, and get a good amount of breastmilk stored. Some mothers expect to express lots of milk but this may be difficult because you are still feeding your baby and then expressing for extra milk afterwards – that's why it's good to get a head start.

Below are some storage tips for freezing expressed breastmilk:

- Name and date the breastmilk container with the date on which you expressed it. Use the breastmilk with the earliest date first (apply the first in, first out rule).
- Freeze your breastmilk in the amounts that you will most likely need. If baby drinks 50 ml a feed, store in 50 ml amounts or in the full amount for the day.
- Only add breastmilk to breastmilk of the same temperature. For example, warm milk from your breast should be allowed to cool down in the fridge before it is mixed with breastmilk that has been in the fridge.

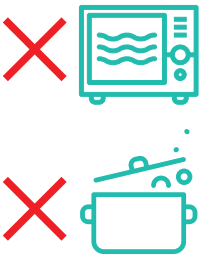
Storage guidelines for expressed breastmilk for full term healthy babies at home:

MILK STORAGE/ HANDLING	DEEP FREEZE -18°C	FREEZER SECTION OF FRIDGE WITH SEPARATE DOOR	FRIDGE 4°C	INSULATED COOLER WITH ICE PACKS 15°C	ROOM TEMPERATURE 25°C
Fresh	6 to 12 months	3 months	3 days optimal; up to 6 days acceptable	24 hours	4 hours optimal; up to 8 hours acceptable under clean conditions
Frozen, thawed in fridge	Do not refreeze	Do not refreeze	24 hours	Do not store	4 hours
Thawed, warmed, not fed	Do not refreeze	Do not refreeze	4 hours	Do not store	Until feeding ends
Warmed, fed	Discard	Discard	Discard	Discard	Until feeding ends

Preparing breastmilk before it is fed to your baby

Breastmilk can be defrosted in the fridge the day before you need to use it. You can warm up the expressed breastmilk to room temperature by standing it in a container of warm water.

Most breastmilk will separate if it has stood for a time. If this happens gently mix the breastmilk by slowly shaking up your container. **DO NOT** boil your breastmilk or use a microwave to heat it; this can damage the nutritional properties of your breastmilk and also burn your baby's mouth.



DO NOT boil your breastmilk or use a microwave to heat it; this can damage the nutritional properties

By following the guidelines below, you will be able to express your breastmilk and leave it for your baby while you are at work. Make sure that the person looking after your baby knows how much breastmilk to give at each feed and how to feed your breastmilk to your baby.

Expressed breastmilk guidelines for feeding

BABY'S AGE	AVERAGE MILK PER FEED	AVERAGE MILK INTAKE PER DAY
First week (after day 4)	30-60 ml	300-600 ml
Weeks 2 & 3	60-90 ml	450-750 ml
Months 1-6	90-150 ml	750-1040 ml

Adapted from Nancy Mohrbacher, IBCLC

After six months, when your baby is starting to eat solids, his or her breastmilk intake will begin to decrease. However, you should continue to breastfeed because breastmilk will still contribute significantly to your baby's nutritional needs.

BABY'S AGE	AVERAGE MILK PER FEED	AVERAGE MILK INTAKE PER DAY
7 to 11 months	120 – 150 ml	800 - 900 ml
12 to 24 months	100 – 120 ml	400 - 550 ml

SOUTH AFRICAN LAWS PROTECTING PREGNANT WOMEN AND BREASTFEEDING IN THE WORKPLACE

The *South African Code of Good Practice on the Protection of Employees during Pregnancy and after the Birth of a Child* which forms part of the *Basic Conditions of Employment Act (No. 75 of 1997 as amended)*, stipulates that arrangements should be made for employees who are breastfeeding to have breaks of 30 minutes twice per day for breastfeeding or milk expression each working day for the first six months of the child's life.

The Basic Conditions of Employment Act (No. 75 of 1997 as amended) offers women four months' maternity leave, six weeks of which must be taken after the birth of the baby. Paid maternity leave is not obligatory.

Unemployment insurance in the form of a maternity benefit can be claimed if contributions have been made by the mother to the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) in the months preceding her pregnancy. The benefit can be claimed for a maximum of 121 days of up to an amount of 60 percent of the contributor's salary. However, a sliding scale is adopted, and women earning at the higher end of the scale may claim significantly less than 60 percent. The highest earning women may claim a maximum of only 38 percent of their salary.

The *Basic Conditions of Employment Act, the Labour Relations Act (No. 66 of 1995), and the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act (No. 4 of 2000)* protect women against dismissal during their maternity leave; deem dismissals for pregnancy or reasons related to pregnancy as automatically unfair; and expressly prohibit any form of discrimination on the grounds of pregnancy.

Code of Good Practice on the Protection of Employees During Pregnancy and After the Birth of a Child as per the regulation Gazette No 6342 of 1998, issued in terms of the *Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997* (the Code) guarantees breastfeeding breaks. South Africa has adopted the Code which provides that arrangements should be made to enable women who are returning to work to have breaks of 30 minutes twice per day for breastfeeding or milk expression each working day for the first six months of the child's life. The Code was developed and adopted in terms of section 87(1)(b) of the *Basic Conditions of Employment Act*, with the objective of providing "guidelines for employers and employees concerning the protection of the health of women against potential hazards in their work environment during pregnancy, after the birth of a child and while breastfeeding".

The code of good practice can be found on the Department of Labour website.



By creating a supportive environment for breastfeeding mothers in the workplace, you are complying with legislation and promoting the health and wellbeing of your employees and their babies.

OTHER USEFUL RESOURCES

Breastfeeding resources

- South African Department of Health - **http://www.health.gov.za/**
- The South African Breastmilk Reserve (SABR) is the Department of Health's largest milk bank partner. They can help you find out if there is a milk bank near you, which you can donate to, or access - **https://www.sabr.org.za**
- The Human Milk Bank Association of South Africa (HMBASA) is an NGO that coordinates milk banks in South Africa - **https://hmbasa.org.za**
- International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN) aims to improve the health and well-being of babies and young children, their mothers and their families through the protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding - **www.ibfan.org**
- World Health Organisation - **www.who.int/topics/breastfeeding/en/**
- UNICEF - **https://www.unicef.org/nutrition/index_24824.html**
- World Breastfeeding Week - **http://worldbreastfeedingweek.org**
- 100% breastfed campaign - **https://100percentbreastfed.co.za/**

Resources for pregnant women and caregivers of babies and young children

- Sign up for to MomConnect a free SMS and Whatsapp stage-based messaging service from the National Department of Health. **Dial *134*550# from your cellphone to register.**
- Look out for the *How to Raise a Happy and Healthy Child* booklet in your home language in your state clinic or hospital, as well as other Side-by-Side materials.

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HEALTH SERVICES	
Your local clinic	
Your doctor	
AIDS Helpline	0800 012 322
Depression/Mental Health helplines	0800 12 13 14/011 262 6396, sms 31393
Emergency ambulance	10177
From a mobile:	112
Poison information centre	0861 555 777
MomConnect	*134*550#
BIRTH REGISTRATION AND IDENTITY DOCUMENTS	
Home Affairs Toll Free helpline	0800 601 190
CHILD PROTECTION AND SAFETY	
Police emergency number	10111
Childline toll free	0800 055 555 / 0800 123 321
GRANTS	
SASSA Toll Free helpline	0800 601 011 / 0800 600 160 GrantEnquiries@sassa.gov.za
CHILD CARE AND EDUCATION	
Your local ECD centre, creche, preschool, child minder	

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Let's work together side by side to **encourage mothers to breastfeed anytime and anywhere.**

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