

# How should you talk to your employer about nursing breaks?

Tell your supervisor, manager, or Human Resources personnel during your pregnancy that you will need time and a space to pump breast milk when you return to work. Be ready to offer ideas on how to make it work and explain what you will need.

The Business Case for Breastfeeding (BCB) is a helpful resource to use when thinking through how to talk with your employer, and includes handouts that you can give your employer. The toolkit offers information on the benefits of breastfeeding support programs for employers as well as tips, strategies, and resources they can use to meet the needs of both their staff and their business.

The BCB's [\*Employee's Guide to Breastfeeding and Working\*](#) includes helpful information for employees, including the following guidance on talking to your employer:

*Most employers are happy to provide the support you need, as long as they know what your needs are and how important it is for you to have their support. If your company does not have a breastfeeding support program, it could be that nobody has asked for one!*

- *Breastfeeding is the healthiest choice for your baby, resulting in fewer illnesses, infections, and certain types of skin irritations (dermatitis). It also helps you recover from pregnancy, and may reduce your risk of breast cancer. Be sure to discuss these important reasons to breastfeed with your supervisor.*
- *Your supervisor may not know what you need to continue breastfeeding. Simply explain your basic needs for privacy and flexible breaks to express milk.*
- *Show how meeting your breastfeeding needs will benefit the company.*
  - *Employees are less likely to miss work to take care of a sick baby because the baby is healthier. (This is true for moms and dads.)*
  - *Health care costs are lower since both baby and mother are healthier.*
  - *Employees who receive support for breastfeeding are happier and more productive.*
- *Explain that you are committed to keeping the milk expression area clean when you are through, storing your milk properly, and not taking longer than necessary for milk expression breaks.*
- *Be prepared! Consider possible concerns your supervisor might have.*
- *Be a team member. Be sensitive to the issues that are important to your company, and show how supporting your efforts to breastfeed can help both of you accomplish your goals.*
- *Be sure to show your appreciation for efforts made by your supervisor to support your breastfeeding.*

The chart below outlines some of the most common responses moms receive when talking to their employer and may help you consider and prepare for any concerns your employer may have.

If your employer says...	Try responding with...
"The bathroom is the only space available."	"Breast milk is food for my baby so it shouldn't be expressed in a bathroom, but I looked into some solutions that other companies have used that I think will work here too." [If needed: "Finding a space that isn't a bathroom is required by law."]
"How am I supposed to cover your position while you are on break?"	"I thought through a schedule and how we could handle it. It's actually pretty similar to how we handle other staff breaks - can I tell you what I had in mind?"
"This will be bad for business."	"Actually, a lot of companies say that its <i>good</i> for business. Breastfeeding will help keep me and my baby healthy so I can do my best work."
"Why can't you just pump when you get home?"	"If I don't pump as often as my baby eats, my supply will go down and I won't make enough to feed her. It's really important to me and its only temporary."
"My daughter/niece/friend drank formula and she's the smartest/fastest/healthiest kid in her class."	"Lots of kids do! But this is really important to me and is recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics. I can't do it without your support."
"I can't make any promises if it gets busy."	"I'm more than willing to be flexible and I know we can make this work for both of us." [If needed: "Accommodating me is required by law."]