



# NRCS Lactation Support Guide

## A Handbook for Expectant and Nursing Working Mothers

Steps for Creating a Breastfeeding-Friendly Worksite



United States Department of Agriculture





# Breastfeeding *WORKS* for Working Women!

## Here's How

*"I am honored to work for an agency that recognizes the changing times and the value of retaining employees. It is your choice to work and breastfeed your child and you have the right to do both together."*

Wynea L. Buford, District Conservationist, OH

Congratulations for making the healthy choice to breastfeed your baby! Mothers everywhere have found that they can continue to give their babies important health benefits even after they return to work - even field work!. This guide will help you combine breastfeeding with your working life.



Alison Steglich, Soil Scientist, FL

### Where to find breastfeeding help and support

- Your health care provider
- NRCS Lactation Support Program Website: <https://nrcs.sc.egov.usda.gov/multi/nrcspeople/Worklife/>
- NRCS Nursing Mothers Group monthly teleconferences: information can be found at <https://nrcs.sc.egov.usda.gov/multi/nrcspeople/Worklife/>
- Find a lactation consultant in your community: [www.ilca.org](http://www.ilca.org) or <http://www.iblce.org/> (Click on "Find a Lactation Consultant")
- WIC (Women, Infants & Children) Program: check with your local health department and visit <http://wicworks.nal.usda.gov/breastfeeding> and [http://www.nal.usda.gov/wicworks/LearningCenter/loving\\_support.html](http://www.nal.usda.gov/wicworks/LearningCenter/loving_support.html)
- The National Breastfeeding Helpline: 1-800-994-9662
- La Leche League, International 1-800-LALECHE or [www.la lecheleague.org](http://www.la lecheleague.org)
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)/Office on Women's Health: 1-800-994-WOMAN (9662) or [www.womenshealth.gov](http://www.womenshealth.gov)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <http://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/index.htm>
- US Dept. of Labor: <http://www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/whdfs73.htm>
- AgLearn: <https://aglearn.usda.gov> – launch Books 24x7 and search breastfeeding – There are many books available.
- Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies Coalition: <http://www.hmhb.org/>
- For inspiration on combining fieldwork and pumping: [Hirkani's Daughters: Women Who Scale Modern Mountains to Combine Breastfeeding and Working](#), edited by Jennifer Hicks

# Benefits of Breastfeeding

Breast milk is the most complete infant food and breastfeeding is the most economical and convenient way for a mother to feed her baby. Providing working mothers with a space to express breast milk gives them the opportunity to extend the bonding period. New mothers are more content when they can combine work with breastfeeding.

### Benefits for the Baby:

- Breastfed babies have fewer ear and respiratory infections.
- Breastfeeding provides protection against SIDS--sudden infant death syndrome.
- Babies that are breastfed have lower infant mortality rates.
- Breastfed babies have fewer allergies.
- Breastfeeding reduces the incidences of cancer.
- Breastfeeding reduces medical costs for both mother and baby.



Wynea Buford, NRCS OH

### Benefits for the Mother:

- Breastfeeding promotes a strong, early bonding of mother and child.
- Women who breastfeed have fewer incidents of pre-menopausal ovarian and breast cancer.
- Breastfeeding mothers often have the ability to eat more while potentially losing weight.
- Breast milk allows for a potential savings of as much as \$100 per month in formula costs.
- Mothers who are breastfeeding often miss less work due to the improved health of the baby.

### Benefits for the Agency:

- Employees are more likely to return to work after childbirth when their workplace provides a supportive environment for continued breastfeeding.
- Employees are less likely to miss work, since their babies are typically healthier.
- Being able to retain experienced employees after childbirth means lowering or eliminating the costs to hire temporary staff or to recruit, hire, and train replacement staff, not to mention the costs from lost revenue while getting new staff up to speed.
- A supportive environment builds loyalty, improves morale, and increases job satisfaction.
- Health care costs to the agency are less, since mother and baby are typically healthier.



*"I have missed less than 40 hours of work due to a child's sickness in the last four years (3 children). Continuing to nurse while working provides your child with disease-fighting substances that protect your baby from illness (e.g. ear infections) (left photo: 1st and 2nd child right photo: 3rd child at 6th month routine checkup.)"*

Wynea L. Buford, District Conservationist, OH



# Getting Started with Breastfeeding

## During Pregnancy

- Pregnancy is the best time to prepare for breastfeeding and returning to work.
- Attend prenatal classes available at your hospital, workplace, WIC clinic, or private physician clinic.
- Attend La Leche League meetings to learn more about how to combine breastfeeding and employment.
- Talk with your supervisor in advance to discuss your plans to breastfeed and ask about private areas where you can comfortably and safely express milk (as required by the Affordable Care Act).
- Connect with the NRCS's Lactation Support Program (<https://nrsc/sc.egov.usda.gov/multi/nrcspeople/Worklife/>).
- Attend a NRCS Mother's Group monthly teleconference meeting.
- Ask the lactation program director, your supervisor, wellness program director, employee human resources office, or other coworkers if they know of other women at in the NRCS who have breastfed after returning to work. Find out their tips for making it work including finding an affordable electric breast pump.
- Work with your insurance company to obtain the breast pump kit available to you, free of charge, through the Affordable Care Act, or obtain one of your choice at your own expense.
- If returning to a position that requires field work or periods of time away from your office, research the type of equipment needed to pump in the different work places or field sites.
- Acquire your pump and necessary equipment before your baby is born and become comfortable with it. Make sure all the parts work properly and fit your needs. You may need to buy different sizes of phalanges or different battery attachments.



*"The time to speak with your supervisor about your intent to pump at work is during pregnancy or before returning to work after the delivery. (Left photo 9 month 2009; right photo: 2nd child with pumped milk bottle)."*

Wynea Buford

## During the First Weeks of Your Baby's Life

- Get a good start in the hospital by putting your baby to the breast within the first hour after birth, and at least 8-12 times every 24 hours. This will help you establish a good milk supply for when you return to work. Your first milk (colostrum) is packed with antibodies that help protect your baby from illness.
- Your milk is perfect for your baby's needs, even though it may seem you are not making much the first few days.
- Your baby's stomach is very small at first (only the size of a large marble!) and only holds 1-2 teaspoons, so the baby doesn't need much! Between days 2-5 your body will begin making larger volumes of milk.
- Ask the hospital for names of people you can call if you have questions about breastfeeding.
- Breastfeeding does not always come naturally, especially if you have complications or a cesarean delivery, which sometimes delays milk production. However, find a good lactation consultant, doctor, friend, or spouse who can help you and provide ideas to work through the learning process. Don't get discouraged, it will work!
- The first few weeks after childbirth are a learning time for you and your baby. Use these important weeks to rest and take care of yourself and your baby. Encourage your spouse or partner to assist you in anyway possible.
- Watch for signs that your baby is getting plenty of milk. By day 5, baby should have around four to six wet diapers and three to four yellow, seedy stools every 24 hours.
- Avoid using bottles for the first 3-4 weeks as this may decrease milk supply. A lactation consultant can help you know you are making plenty of milk, and provide information on other ways to comfort your baby.
- If you and your baby need to be apart, you can express your milk manually or with a breast pump.



Shea O'Keefe, Area Biologist, CA and son Aidan

*"I feel privileged to work for an agency that supports breastfeeding and breastfeeding mothers. Coming back to work following childbirth was difficult, but the agency eased my transition back by allowing me to continue my bonding experience. Breastfeeding is an amazing gift that I had the honor of sharing with both of my children, even after returning to work."*

Jenna Brazil, Soil Conservationist, CA



## During your Maternity Leave

- Employees are able to use a combination of sick leave, annual leave, and leave without pay. The general guidance for use of sick leave for recovery from natural child birth is six weeks, and eight weeks following a cesarean delivery. Following recovery, annual leave and leave without pay is appropriate. In addition to sick and annual leave, the *Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA)* entitles you to take up to 12 weeks of leave without pay for the birth and care of a newborn, during the first year. This entitlement expires 12 months after you invoke FMLA. When FMLA is invoked, you may use available leave to be paid during this time. FMLA time can be taken intermittently. For more information on leave flexibilities, including FMLA, go to <http://www.opm.gov/oca/leave/HTML/childbirthfs.asp>. It is recommended FMLA be invoked only after exhausting other options; therefore it will be available if something unexpected comes up, such as a desire to take longer maternity leave than originally approved, etc.
- Focus on your baby during this time and make time to rest. Try to rest or sleep when your baby sleeps. House work can wait or be taken on by family and friends.
- Get a good quality breast pump. A good quality electric double breast pump may be your best strategy for efficiently removing milk during the workday. Contact your local hospital, WIC, or Public Health Department to find where to buy or rent a good pump. Electric pumps that allow you to express milk from both breasts at the same time reduce pumping time! The *Affordable Care Act* mandates all insurance providers to cover the cost of one breast pump kit, per calendar year for women who are pregnant and/or nursing. The kit will include a pump and a supply of 150 milk storage bags. An additional 150 bags are available every 90 days, even if you own your own breast pump.
- Early in your maternity leave, practice expressing your milk by hand or with a quality breast pump, and freeze 1-2 ounces at a time to save for your baby after you return to work. This also helps you increase your milk production. Pick times of the day when you seem to have the most milk. For many women, this is early in the morning. Some women express milk during or after their baby nurses since the milk has already “let down” and flows easily. After several days of pumping, your milk supply will increase and you will be able to freeze larger volumes of milk. A reasonable goal for storing frozen milk is 4-6 ounces per day.
- Be aware that a pump will never express milk as efficiently as a baby. Once you return to work, you may need to supplement the frozen milk to the fresh milk expressed at work to meet your baby’s needs. Another option is to add an additional pumping in to your day. This will help increase your milk production and provide extra stored milk.
- Be patient with yourself. It takes time for both you and your baby to adjust to your new lives together. Follow your baby’s cues for when and how long to breastfeed, and enjoy this special time together!
- Help your baby adjust to taking breast milk from a bottle around 4 weeks old. Because babies are used to nursing with mom, they usually drink from a bottle or cup when offered by somebody else! If your baby takes the bottle or cup easily the first time, simply offer “reminder” bottles periodically until you return to work. If your baby seems opposed to the bottle, you still have time to work on the adjustment. Try nipples of different shapes and sizes. Infants, 3 to 4 months old, may also use a cup. If problems persist, work with an occupational therapist to find a solution that meets your baby’s needs.
- Talk with your family and your childcare provider about your progress, questions, and intent to continue breast feeding, and let them know you are counting on their support and help.



Hilary Phillips, NRCS CA

## Back at Work

*“Being a first time breastfeeding mom and return full time to work when your daughter is 4 months old seems not an easy transition. But thanks to NRCS, my supervisor and colleagues’ support of my breastfeed pumping schedule made it flexible. I had a private office to pump, which made me feel comfortable, happy to be back in the office and at the same time have the peace of mind that I was able to provide my daughter this valuable healthy gift.”*

Heydsha R. Cordero-Rodriguez, Soil Conservationist, MD



Heydsha R. Cordero-Rodriguez, Soil Conservationist, MD and daughter

## Return to Work Gradually

This gives you more time to adjust and helps your body make a good supply of milk. Talk with your supervisor about options that have worked for different women:

- Start back to work part-time for a period before working full-time.
- Work from home or combine working at home and at the office.
- Visit NRCS People at: <https://nrcs.sc.egov.usda.gov/multi/nrcspeople/default.aspx> and click Telework for the NRCS Telework policy, frequently asked questions, and more.
- Go back to work on a Thursday or Friday or just before 1-2 days off, depending on your work week. This gives you and your baby a shorter period to adjust to being away from each other before you go back full-time.
- Take Wednesdays off for a few weeks for a mid-week break, and breastfeed on your baby’s schedule to rebuild your milk supply.
- Work a split shift, with a long break in the middle of the day to go home and be with your baby.
- Consider using childcare close to work so you can visit and breastfeed your baby, if feasible, based on your work schedule and childcare options.
- Decide the best way to deliver breast milk to your childcare provider. Many providers have freezers and can store larger amounts in case you are out in the field or your child needs more. Make sure your childcare provider lets you know how much your child is drinking, so you can keep up with the demand.
- When you arrive to pick up your baby from childcare, take time to breastfeed first. This will give you both time to reconnect before traveling home and returning to family and other responsibilities.



## Identify a Private Place to Express Milk

Work with your supervisor to determine a private place to express your milk. It is required by the Affordable Care Act that the NRCS provide a private space with an electrical outlet that is not a restroom. Some offices may already have a dedicated private lactation room for expressing milk.

- If, during pregnancy, you find out that your office does not provide a private lactation room, identify a temporary private area you can use. Ideas: an employee office with a door for privacy, conference room, or a little-used closet or storage area. The basic essentials are that the room is private and can be secured from intruders when in use and has an electrical outlet if you are using an electric breast pump.
- Explain to your supervisor that it is best not to express milk in a restroom. Restrooms are unsanitary and there are usually no electrical outlets. It can also be difficult to manage a pump in a toilet stall.
- Nutrition is also critical to your success when you are pumping, especially if you are physically exerting yourself. Make sure to pack nutritious snacks, eat regular meals, and drink more water than you regularly do to keep up your milk supply.



*"The NRCS was very accommodating and did everything they could to ensure I had a private place to breast-feed once I returned to work."*

Nikki Smith, Soil Conservationist, CA

*"Having a place exclusively to pump has helped me with the transition of coming back to work and also being able to provide nourishment for my son. I call it my 'other office'. Having this support from NRCS makes me feel that I am being valued as a working mom and that I don't have to compromise on my son's well-being. This makes me happy."*

Alejandra Luna, HR Specialist, CA



## Combining Field Work with Milk Expression

- If working out of the office with other staff, be direct about your schedule and your need to pump. Plan around your pumping schedule as much as possible.
- When working out of the office, whether in the field or in an office other than your own, remember that your vehicle can always be a private space to express milk in. Explain to your coworkers what time you will be taking your breaks and that you will be taking them in the vehicle. Then park the vehicle in private place, or sit in the backseat if the windows are darkened and lock the doors. Many breast pumps have a car adaptor or battery pack that will allow you to run an electric pump. To clean pump parts, carry a small container of water and dish soap to wash hands and rinse pump parts. You can also use on-the-go wipes to clean pump parts. Another option is to purchase the number of pump parts you will use in a day and then wash them at the end each day or when you return to the office. If your pump doesn't have a cooler built in with an ice pack, bring an extra lunch cooler filled with ice packs to store the expressed milk in.
- If you are going to another field office, call ahead to see what lactation facilities or private spaces are available. Many offices have a spare office available so that you don't have to pump in your vehicle.
- If you work directly with producers, you can have co-workers take over the discussion or work while you take a break. However, if you are the only one working with the producer, either pump before and after you arrive, or be open and honest with the producer and let them know you need to take a break.
- If your field work will be far from your vehicle, carry your pump, battery pack, extra storage bags or bottles, a cooler with ice packs, and oversized shirt or nursing cover with you so that you can express milk anywhere!
- If you are traveling overnight or multiple nights, make sure to pump and store extra breastmilk ahead of time for your child to have while you are gone. Try to get a motel room with a refrigerator if possible and bring a large cooler with ice for transporting the expressed milk back home. If your baby is very young it may be possible to have a partner or childcare provider travel with you (in your POV) so you can still nurse the baby in the evenings after work.
- When flying, remember that FAA regulations do allow for the carry-on transport of breast milk in quantities greater than 3.4 oz. When traveling by air, be sure not to freeze milk in advance, as it will likely thaw in transit. Also, be sure to ask inspectors to change their gloves prior inspecting your pump or milk. Some airports, such as Minneapolis, have designated pumping rooms- ask at a guest services desk.

*Example of a pump set up in a vehicle. Note the nursing cover for added privacy if necessary.*



*"Although challenging at times, balancing breastfeeding and field work was key to keeping my boys healthy and feeling close to them while working."*

Francine Lheritier, Resource Soil Scientist, ID



"I have an amazing supervisor and co-workers who were very supportive of me. This is the only way I was able to continue to provide breastmilk for my daughter, while completing fieldwork across multiple counties and overnight trips. You have to be creative and determined to continue pumping while working long days in the field; however, being able to balance my fieldwork schedule and fulfilling my goals as a mother, really made me enjoy and appreciate my job and NRCS even more."

Sarah Silbernagel, Cultural Resources Specialist, OR



Example of a pump set up on a Universal Terrain Vehicle (UTV).  
Alison Steglich, Soil Scientist, FL

### When to Express Milk

The Affordable Care Act requires employers to allow "reasonable break time for an employee to express breastmilk for her nursing child for 1 year after the child's birth each time such employee has need to express the milk..." The number of times you need to express milk at work should be equal to the number of feedings your baby will need while you are away. In the first months of life babies need to breastfeed 8-12 times in 24 hours. Therefore, you need to express and store milk during those usual feeding times when you are away from your baby. This will maintain a sufficient amount of milk for your childcare provider to feed your baby while you are at work. As the baby gets older, the number of feeding times may decrease.

When babies are around 6 months old and begin solid foods, they generally need to feed less often. However, some babies do not take to solid foods as quickly as others. Many women take their regular breaks and lunch period to pump. Many women express milk anywhere from 10-25 minutes approximately 2-4 times during a typical 8-hour work period. Some women require more time to express milk or need to express milk more times during the day. The time to travel to/from the lactation room must also be factored into the total time needed to express milk.

"I have been grateful of the support I found in the NRCS for breastfeeding mothers. Breastfeeding while working in a field position has required creativity and flexibility. The benefits of breastfeeding are so important and I have been fortunate that I could provide for my children throughout their first year because of the support I had at work."

Shanna Farmer, Soil Conservationist, CA

### Sample Pumping Schedule at Work

Traditional 8-hour work period

8:00 a.m.	Begin work
9:45-10:00	Use break to express milk
12:00 noon	Take allowed lunch period to express milk or visit baby and nurse (if daycare is close enough).
2:30-2:45	Use break to express milk
5:00 p.m.	Leave work

### Secrets to Getting the Milk to Flow

Pumping is easiest when the milk "lets down" through the milk ducts. Massage your breasts, and gently rub your nipples. Relax! As you breathe out, visualize the milk flowing down. Think about your baby! Bring a photo of your baby, a favorite blanket, or article of clothing that smells like your baby. Some mothers bring a tape recording of their baby's voice to help the milk start flowing.

### Storing your Milk

Because your milk is full of antibodies that fight germs and bacteria, it can be safely stored and given to the baby later. Breast milk is food, so it is safe to keep in an employee refrigerator or a cooler with ice packs. Discuss with your supervisor the best place for you to store your milk. Be sure to label the milk container with your name and

**Table 1** Opinions differ as to the amount of time breast milk can be safely stored. The storage times listed here are consistent with the recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Refrigerated 32-39°F or below  <b>Use within 2 days</b>	Frozen (freezer with a door separate from the refrigerator) 0°F or below  <b>Use within 3 months</b>	Thawed (from frozen) and refrigerated 32-39°F or below  <b>Use within 24 hours</b>
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### Coming Up Short

You may find that even after expressing milk the recommended number of times at work you do not have enough fresh milk for baby the following day. If this happens, you have several options before supplementing with formula. Use frozen milk if you have it. Add additional times to express milk, like in the morning after nursing, or in the evening before bed. Express milk on the weekends and store for the upcoming week. Make sure you are drinking enough water and getting enough protein, as your body needs extra water and protein to maintain an adequate milk supply. Ask a lactation consultant for ways to increase your milk production. There are some herbal supplements that help increase milk production. Some birth control methods may interfere with milk production. Consult your physician if you see a loss in production after changing birth control methods. Once you supplement with formula your body will respond to the decreased demand for milk by producing less milk, beginning a difficult cycle to break.



2nd Breastfed baby at 6 weeks  
Francine Lheritier, Area Resource  
Soil Scientist, ID



## Getting Support for Breastfeeding

*“My supervisor and colleagues were so understanding and supportive of me continuing to breast-feed when I returned to work. By being able to pump at the office and in the field, I was able to give my daughter a healthy start - exclusively breastfeeding her for the first six months of her life and continuing to nurse her until she was 16 months old”.*

Jackie Charbonneau, Ecologist, CA

## Approaching your Supervisor

Talking to your supervisor about breastfeeding can be difficult or embarrassing since it seems to be such a private matter. However, it is critical that you communicate with your supervisor so that they know what your needs are and how important it is for you to have their support. It may be that your supervisor is not familiar with breastfeeding or the NRCS breastfeeding policy, or has never encountered this situation. Be prepared to provide information and make your case for the importance of breastfeeding and how it is mutually beneficial for both the employee and the Agency. Remember that asking for support is not an unreasonable demand as the Affordable Health Care Act requires employers provide time and space for mothers to pump at work. In addition, NRCS has policy that further supports and clarifies this.

Contact the NRCS’s Lactation Support Program for resources:

[\(https://nrsc.sc.egov.usda.gov/multi/nrcspeople/Worklife/\)](https://nrsc.sc.egov.usda.gov/multi/nrcspeople/Worklife/).

Here are some tips on how to approach your supervisor and make your case:

- Educate/discuss with your supervisor the importance of breastfeeding. Be prepared to provide factual and credible information. Below are some examples:
  - 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.
- Let your employers know of your pumping needs in advance. Your supervisor may not know what you need to continue breastfeeding. Simply explain your basic needs for privacy and flexible breaks to express milk. Use the sample letter on page 10 of this booklet.
- Show how breastfeeding will also benefit the NRCS.
  - 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. (See Table 2)
- Be a team member. Be sensitive to the issues that are important to your supervisor, 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.
- If your position requires field work, be prepared to present your plan for completing field duties while making time for pumping.



Nikki Smith, NRCS CA

**Table 2** Possible comments from supervisors or co-workers on breastfeeding and how to respond.

What you may hear	What you can do
“We have no space for a pumping area.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look around and find a space you are willing to use.</li> <li>• Remind supervisor how small a space is needed (even a 4’ x 5’ space can work!)</li> <li>• Remind supervisor the Affordable Care Act requires the NRCS provide a space for expressing milk.</li> </ul>
“The other employees might complain if you take time to do this.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage coworkers to learn about the benefits of breastfeeding for you and your baby’s health.</li> <li>• Remind them that this is a temporary need, and the same benefits are available to them under the Affordable Care Act.</li> </ul>
“If we do this for one person, we might have to do this for others, too.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remind supervisor that supporting breastfeeding benefits the agency.</li> <li>• Remind supervisor of other NRCS approved breaks, such as smoking or exercise, if offered.</li> </ul>
“How will you get your work done if you take all breaks to pump?”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remind supervisor that supporting breastfeeding benefits the agency.</li> <li>• Remind supervisor of other NRCS approved breaks, such as smoking or exercise, if offered.</li> </ul>
“How will you get your fieldwork done if breaks are taken for pumping?”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Present your plan of how you will complete your duties and pumping.</li> <li>• Remind supervisor of other NRCS approved breaks, such as smoking or exercise, if offered.</li> </ul>

*“Being supported by my supervisor to provide breastmilk for my daughter, after returning to work when she was 4-months old, allowed that transition to occur.”*

Hilary Phillips, District Conservationist, CA



## Dealing with Coworkers

Your colleagues at work may make comments about your frequent breaks, your pump, the milk stored in the refrigerator, or the time you spend with your baby. This can make some mothers feel uncomfortable and can lead to resentment and problems between co-workers. Here are some suggestions on proactive things you can do to enlist support.

- May need to educate co-workers. Seek to understand coworker concerns and work together to find solutions. They may not be aware the benefits of breastfeeding and that the law allows for time and space for mothers to pump. Be prepared with facts and figures about breastfeeding.
- Let coworkers know that breastfeeding is not only the healthiest choice for you and your baby, but it also helps lower the Agency's health care costs and reduce the rate of absenteeism.
- If other workers do not understand the breaks you are taking to express milk, remind them you are using allowed breaks and the same benefits are available to them under the Affordable Care Act.
- If working away from your normal duty station (training or other offices), be an advocate for yourself, share what your needs are, and have a plan ahead of time.
- Be discreet in the workplace. Some people will never guess what you are keeping in the lunch bag on the refrigerator shelf.
- Cite a medical reason for continuing to breastfeed, such as building your baby's immune system.
- Acknowledge and thank people for the times when they have covered for you while you have been pumping or feeding your baby. Return the favor when they need your help.
- Tell them that you are continuing to breastfeed because your pediatrician and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommend it.
- Use humor. Laugh off any teasing that comes your way.



Hue Dang, Resource Conservationist in CA with son Phap

## Find Other Breastfeeding Mothers

- Seek out other breastfeeding mothers at work and share experiences and tips through e-mail, USDA Connect, or even a monthly lunchtime mothers' support meeting. If there are no other breastfeeding women at work, ask your local hospital for information about local mothers' groups. Also contact the NRCS's Lactation Support Program for a list of resources including other employees that are willing to provide information and support (<https://nrcs.sc.egov.usda.gov/multi/nrcspeople/Worklife/>).

*"It is great to have a great support network through family and co-workers. Don't be afraid to talk with other mothers in the agency who have nursed/pumped while working. Ask about the challenges they faced and how they were solved."*

Wynea L. Buford, District Conservationist, OH

You can use the sample letter below to tell your supervisor about your breastfeeding needs. Feel free to use your own words and relate it to your specific work situation.

TO: [Supervisor's Name]  
FROM: [Your name]  
RE: Lactation Support in the Workplace

Thank you for your support during my [# of months or years] with NRCS. This is an exciting time for my family and me as we prepare for the birth of our child. I am eager to work with you in making preparations that will allow me to return to work after the birth of my baby.

After speaking with my doctor and other health professionals, I have made the decision to breastfeed my baby. Just as I try to give my best to the agency when I am at work, I also want to give the best I can to my baby.

My doctor tells me that breastfeeding is important in preventing many illnesses and diseases for both my baby and me. Many businesses across America help their employees make this possible, and I hope we can find solutions together. Here are my immediate needs:

1. A private area with an electrical outlet to express milk during the workday. This space need not be large, even a 4' x 5' area is sufficient. The Affordable Care Act requires employers, like the NRCS, to provide a private space with an electrical outlet. Let's work together to identify an appropriate space.
2. Flexibility to use break times to express milk. I will likely need to express milk about two to three times during an 8-hour shift to relieve breast fullness and to maintain my milk supply. Pumping takes around 20 minutes (plus time to get to and from a place to pump). The Affordable Care Act requires employers to allow "reasonable break time for an employee to express breastmilk for her nursing child for 1 year after the child's birth each time such employee has need to express the milk..." The number of times I need to express milk at work will be equal to the number of feedings my baby needs while I'm at work. The amount of time and number of times that I need to express milk during the workday will change over time.

Thank you. Knowing the NRCS is making it possible for me to continue breastfeeding will help me feel much better about leaving my baby to come back to work. I look forward to discussing this with you.

Sincerely,  
[YourName]



Below is another approach to start the conversation with your supervisor- Sample letter from your doctor on your breastfeeding needs. [Taken from <http://www.workandpump.com/> website.]

## A Letter From Physician

Dear Employer:

I am writing on behalf of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.  
Mother's Name Baby's Name

This mother will soon be returning to work at your facility. I have strongly advised her to continue providing breast milk to her baby after she returns to work.

Breastfeeding is a natural part of the birthing cycle, and significantly lowers the mother's risk for breast cancer, ovarian cancer and osteoporosis the longer she is able to breastfeed. Breastfed babies continue to receive antibodies to protect them against infection and disease for as long as they breastfeed. This is especially important for babies in childcare centers. Babies receive most of their nutrition from their mother's milk, even after they begin eating solid foods. Breastfeeding provides protection against chronic childhood illnesses, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), respiratory problems and certain childhood cancers.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends breastfeeding for at least one year or longer to protect babies against diabetes, obesity, and osteoporosis. Breastfeeding also enhances brain development and intelligence.

As an employer who supports your employee's decision to provide her baby with the optimal infant nutrition, you will ensure a more loyal and productive employee, happy in knowing she can contribute to her child's health even when apart. She will have less absenteeism from her job because of infant illnesses--her baby will have fewer ear-aches, gastrointestinal and other infant health problems.

All major health organizations, including the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the U.S. Surgeon General, and the American Academy of Family Physicians support breastfeeding and encourage employers to do the same.

Sincerely,

[Physician's Name]

## NRCS Employee Breastfeeding Support Guide

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