



Benefits of Breastfeeding

[The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill](#)

Prepared by the Carolina Women's Center & Committee on the Status of Women

INTRODUCTION

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill is committed to supporting employees with children, including nursing mothers who want to lactate at work. Not all women want to or can breastfeed, but many mothers do, as recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP).¹ Some combine breastfeeding with formula feeding by nursing before and after work and on their days off.

In line with federal and state regulations, UNC-CH has a policy to support breastfeeding in the workplace. This toolkit provides information on the health and business benefits of breastfeeding, about UNC-CH's policies and mandates around lactation spaces, and on ways for both supervisors and employees to balance work with the right to lactate.

BENEFITS OF BREASTFEEDING

Some of the benefits of breastfeeding for babies include

- Fewer ear and respiratory infections;
- Protection against SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome);
- Lower mortality rate;
- Fewer allergies and less dermatitis;
- Fewer gastrointestinal disorders;
- Lower risk of Types 1 and 2 diabetes
- Reduced incidences of cancer; and,
- Reduced medical costs for both mother and baby.²

Documented benefits for mothers include

- Decreased risk of premenopausal ovarian and breast cancer;
- Potential for more rapid return to pre-pregnancy weight;
- Lower risk of Type 2 diabetes;
- Lower risk of osteoporosis;
- Potential savings of as much as \$105 per month in formula costs; and
- Strong, early bonding of mother and child.

What Happens When Women Can't Pump/Express Their Milk?

Breastfeeding women need time to express/pump their milk regularly or they can suffer the following:

- **Extreme discomfort and distraction**, similar to a desperate need to pee.
- **Mastitis**, a very painful swelling and infection of the breast tissue which requires medical attention.
- **A decreased ability to produce enough milk** for their child.

¹ www.aap.org/healthtopics/breastfeeding.cfm. The AAP and the American Association of Family Physicians recommend that mothers breastfeed their infants until at least twelve months old. Many women choose not to or are unable to breastfeed. We recognize and support the full range of parenting and strive to make UNC family friendly for all families.

² *The Lancet Series*, "Breastfeeding: Achieving the New Normal," compiles the full benefits of breastfeeding for maternal and child health. It "represents the most in-depth analysis done so far into the health and economic benefits that breastfeeding can produce." <http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736%2816%2900210-5/fulltext>.

LACTATION IN THE WORKPLACE

Not long ago, breastfeeding was considered a private action, solely carried out in the home. But today, many mothers choose to continue to breastfeed after returning to work. Not only does breastfeeding benefit the mother and child, it also accrues benefits to the mother's colleagues and workplace. The US Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) reports that businesses which support breastfeeding enjoy "more satisfied, loyal employees and cost savings to the business" in the form of lower health care and insurance costs.³ In actively supporting breastfeeding mothers, employers assist themselves, their organizations, and society.

Breastfeeding support programs provide the following social benefits⁴:

- **Lower healthcare costs** for individuals and companies.
- **Fewer workplace absences:** Mothers who do not breastfeed need twice as many one-day absences to care for sick children as mothers who do breastfeed.
- **Reduce costly employee turnover and improve retention:** Breastfeeding support programs reduce costly turnover,⁵ thus reducing costs for training new employees.
- **Increased positive morale and productivity,** as well as improved public relations.

Breastfeeding Lowers Healthcare Costs for Organizations

For every 1,000 babies not breastfed, there are an extra

- 2,033 doctor visits
- 212 days in the hospital
- 609 prescriptions

³ <http://mchb.hrsa.gov/pregnancyandbeyond/breastfeeding/>;
<http://mchb.hrsa.gov/pregnancyandbeyond/breastfeeding/businessmanagers.pdf>;
<http://www.businessgrouphealth.org/pub/f2ffe4f0-2354-d714-5136-79a21e9327ed>.

⁴ <http://mchb.hrsa.gov/pregnancyandbeyond/breastfeeding/businessmanagers.pdf>;
<http://www.womenshealth.gov/breastfeeding/employer-solutions/business-case.html>.

⁵ Ortiz J., McGilligan K., Kelly P. (2004). Duration of breast milk expression among working mothers enrolled in an employer-sponsored lactation program. *Pediatr Nurs*; 30:111-119.

Quick References

- **Parenting@UNC:** <http://womenscenter.unc.edu/resources/parenting/>
- **Lactation Room Locations:** <http://womenscenter.unc.edu/lactation-rooms/>
- **On-campus Lactation Resources:** <http://womenscenter.unc.edu/lactation-resources/>
- **Carolina Women’s Center:** cwc@unc.edu, 919-962-8305

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