Her Iechyd Cymru Health Challenge Wales

Llaeth Mam Mother's Milk

Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Breastfeeding and Returning to Work

unicef

Many breastfeeding women are able to carry on feeding when they return to work. There is no need to stop.

Once a mother has made arrangements with her employer, she often finds it comforting to be able to continue this close bond with her baby.

Employers have legal obligations towards their breastfeeding employees and if you wish to continue breast-feeding you should discuss this before your return to work.

Information for Employees

Continuing breastfeeding and working

Firstly it is important that you let your employer know that you will be breastfeeding when you return to work. Your employer may already have a Welsh Assembly Government Corporate Health Standard Award that requires suitable facilities for breastfeeding mothers. On the other hand, your employer may not have come across a breastfeeding member of staff before so you will both need to explore the options.

You have several possibilities:

- Express milk (taking milk from the breast by hand or using a pump) so that someone else can feed your baby while you are at work;
- Ask your employer for flexible working hours, to be timed around your breast-feeding needs;
- Find child care for your baby near to your workplace so that you can feed during breaks or before and after your working day.

Expressing milk at work

- You can express milk by hand or you may decide to use a pump.
- Friends, breastfeeding supporters or health professionals can discuss with you the different types.
- If you practise in advance of going back to work you will have an idea of how long it takes as well as getting you used to expressing.
- It is useful to build up a supply of expressed milk to reduce the pressure on you when you first go back to work.
- Make sure all the equipment you use is sterilised first.

Storing Breastmilk

- You can store breastmilk in a fridge - ask your employer to provide one if there isn't one - and take it home in a coolbag.
- It can be stored at 5°C - 10°C for up to 3 days and can be frozen for up to 6 months.
- Label and date expressed milk before storing.

Helpful Hints - be prepared!

- Keep an extra top and some spare breast-pads at work.
- Try out your childcare arrangements before starting work to give you and your baby a chance to get used to it.

Useful Links

www.dti.gov.uk for "Pregnancy and work - what you need to know as an employee"

www.hse.gov.uk/mothers for "A guide for new and expectant mothers who work" - Health and Safety Executive

www.wales.gov.uk/corporatehealthstandard for information about the Welsh Assembly Government's Corporate Health Standard that requires suitable facilities for breastfeeding mothers.

www.wales.gov.uk/breastfeeding for information about breastfeeding in Wales and links to support organisations.

The information in this leaflet may also be of interest to students who wish to continue breastfeeding when they return to College/ School.

Information for Employers

Reasons to support breastfeeding mothers

As well as certain legal obligations, there are business benefits to supporting breastfeeding staff, eg:

- Breastfed babies are healthier so reduced employee absence due to child illness;
- Increased employee loyalty with a higher rate of return to work;
- Less need for new staff recruitment and training costs;
- Attractive benefit to offer employees.
- Breastfeeding mothers have lower risk of some cancers and osteoporosis (bone thinning).

Ways employers can help

Draw up a policy to support breastfeeding that includes:

- Flexible working hours for breastfeeding mothers;
- A break allowance so that mothers can express milk;
- A clean, warm, private room for expressing (not the toilet);
- A fridge to store expressed milk.

Make sure employees are aware of your policy before they go on maternity leave.

What the law says

A mother can decide how long she wishes to breastfeed and she does not need to stop when she returns to work.

Before she returns an employee should notify her employer in writing that she is breastfeeding. An employer must then conduct a specific risk assessment.

The Workplace Regulations and Approved Code of Practice require employers to provide suitable facilities for pregnant and breastfeeding mothers to rest.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) recommends that it is good practice for employers to provide a private, healthy and safe environment for breastfeeding mothers to express and store milk.

Useful Links

http://www.hse.gov.uk/mothers Also see "New and expectant mothers at work: publish A Guide for Employers.

www.wales.gov.uk/corporatehealthstandard for information about the Welsh Assembly Government's Corporate Health Standard that requires suitable facilities for breastfeeding mothers.

www.wales.gov.uk/breastfeeding for information about breastfeeding in Wales and links to support organisations

www.dti.gov.uk for "Pregnancy and work - what you need to know as an employer"

The information in this leaflet may also be of interest to Heads of Colleges/Schools where students wish to continue breastfeeding on returning to their studies.

UK National Helpline:
0844 20 909 20

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