

Frequently Asked Questions (HR/Supervisors/Managers)

- [Frequently Asked Questions – Break Time for Nursing Mothers](#), U.S. Department of Labor

Why is it important for businesses to support lactation?

- Lower health care costs: chest/breastfed babies are sick less often; the longer an individual is able to chest/breastfeed, the less likely they are to experience breast cancer, type 2 diabetes, and heart disease.
- Lower absenteeism rates: because babies are healthier, parents are less likely to miss work.
- Higher retention rates: research shows that employees who receive lactation support at work are more productive and loyal; they are also more likely to return after their parental leave.

Why do employees need time and space for lactation at work?

1. Health Benefits: statistics from the American Academy of Pediatrics have shown that breastfed babies are healthier and in turn have lower health care costs; this leads to less absenteeism for working parents as well.
2. Biological Needs: milk production is a normal, constant, ongoing, biological process. Milk expression must occur on a regular schedule (typically every 3 hours) to keep the supply going. When unable to express milk, it builds up and can be quite painful and also lead to infection.
3. Comfort: a lactation space is necessary because those needing to express milk are able to do so more efficiently when they are relaxed and in a less stressful environment.
4. Privacy: private spaces are necessary because pumping/milk expression is not as discreet as physically chest/breastfeeding the child. In addition, pumps and parts need to be kept clean and expressed milk stored properly.

I didn't know we had a UK Lactation Support. Is it widely-used?

We currently have over 20 officially registered rooms. Some employees choose to use a temporary space such as their office or a vacant office or room near them that is private and clean.

How often do employees need to pump? How long is each session?

Typically, an employee will need to pump once every 2-3 hours, so in an 8-hour work period, 2-3 pumping sessions will most likely be needed. Each session can take up to 15 minutes, not including travel time to the room (which is why finding a space in close proximity is extra beneficial to employee and employer). As their child gets older, the frequency for which they need to pump will decrease. Studies show that most employees who express milk at work take just 2-3 breaks for a total time of less than 1 hour per 8-hour workday.

What time can be used for expressing milk?

Typically, employees will use their breaks and lunch break to express milk. If additional time is needed, an employee can create a schedule with their supervisor. Any extra time used must be made up according to the employees work schedule and responsibilities. For support and advice, contact Work-Life at worklife@uky.edu

What type of breast pumps are available?

There are three type of pumps. The manual pump, battery operated pumps and electric pump. <https://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/breast-pumps/types-breast-pumps>
There are also hands-free breast pumps <https://momlovesbest.com/hands-free-breast-pumps>

Are there things to consider I should before purchasing a breast pump?

Consider your lifestyle and when you may need to use a breast pump. Everyone is different and you need to choose a pump that makes sense for your needs. <https://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/breastpumps/choosing-breast-pump> Breast pumps are medical devices regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. They can be used to maintain or increase a woman's milk supply, relieve engorged breasts and plugged milk ducts, or pull out flat or inverted nipples so a nursing baby can latch on more easily. If you purchase a pump, consider your needs. For instance, if you'll use the pump only at home, a manual pump or one that plugs into the wall may be fine. If you'll pump at work or otherwise away from home, you may want to consider a device battery-powered or electric pump. <https://www.fda.gov/consumers/consumerupdates/what-know-when-buying-or-using-breast-pump>

What are the benefits of providing hospital-grade pumps in the lactation rooms?

A hospital-grade pump is the strongest and most durable pump available for milk expression. It has a more powerful motor than a personal pump, so it provides a higher level of suction for more efficient pumping, thus reducing the amount of time needed to express milk (a win-win for the employee and employer). This effectively stimulates and raises the levels of prolactin and oxytocin, the hormones responsible for increasing milk production and output.

What sterilization protocol do we need to follow for hospital-grade pumps?

Hospital-grade pumps are designed and approved by the FDA to be safe for multiple users. They are designed with barriers in place that prevent cross contamination. The pump users are responsible for wiping down the pump with a disinfecting wipe (must use gloves when handling these wipes) before and after each use. Rooms should be well stocked with these supplies in addition to hand sanitizer, dish soap, and paper towels. Each user MUST provide their own accessory kit for use with the hospital-grade pump, which they are responsible for maintaining/sterilizing after each use. The accessory kits, unlike the hospital-grade pumps, are single-user items. Some of the UK healthcare lactation location have one of these pumps available in the room.

Do I need to know how to use the hospital-grade pump?

You can watch both short videos on how to use the hospital grade pump prior to usage. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0M6DZh2Wzyl> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1F6VIHOBqu4>. The pumps are easy to use and require little instruction. The most important part is maintaining a clean, sterile environment, which is outlined above. Typically, room representatives will not interact with the pump. Users will need your own pump accessory set/kit.

Why can't employees pump in the bathroom?

Bathrooms are a place to eliminate waste from the body. Human milk is food and should be handled in the same way other food is handled. No one would be willing to prepare food in a bathroom, and that includes human milk.

Where is the expressed milk stored? I'm concerned about people having issues with it being in our shared kitchenette refrigerator.

Human milk is food. The FDA and CDC both state that it can be stored with other food items, however, we understand this is a sensitive topic in the workplace. The easiest workaround is to provide a small dorm-style refrigerator solely for storage of expressed milk. Proper human milk storage guidelines and temperature regulation <https://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/recommendations/handling-breastmilk.htm>. We advise employees who need to store expressed milk to do so in a small cooler or lunch bag to reduce the chance of spills, etc.

What can I do if an employee request a space for lactation, but we don't have a room in our building?

A number of alternative options to a permanent lactation space are available. An employee can use their private office. You can convert an empty office or meeting room, consolidate supply closets and retrofit one for lactation. Additionally, you could think about temporary spaces, such as assigning the employee to an office for the duration of their lactation needs. If the lactations spaces are not too far from where your employee works, they can walk to another building or floor.

How big of a space is needed to create a lactation room?

The space can be as small as 4 feet by 5 feet, though the size of an accessible restroom stall, 7 feet by 7 feet, will be more comfortable. These spaces can be single- or multi-user spaces; if it is for multiple simultaneous users, privacy is an important consideration and can be easily achieved by using curtains, screens, or partitions to create individual spaces within the room.

I have a room I'd like to assign for lactation, what do I need to do?

Great! Your first step is to contact the Office of Work-Life – worklife@uky.edu. We can discuss who the building/facilities contact is and the next steps. If it's something as simple as converting an empty office into a lactation space, we may not need to involve anyone else. We can talk about cost efficient options for obtaining furniture such as UK Surplus Property <https://purchasing.uky.edu/surplus-property>.

Construction/renovation will obviously take more time and involve more planning.

Make sure you create a sign for the outside of the door so that lactating employees can find the location.

Does the Office of Work-Life provide funds to create a lactation room?

The Office of Work-Life can consult on the design specifications for a room, and assist with providing the required specifications, but the financial responsibility lies with the department creating the space.

What does Work-Life provide for my department/lactation room?

Work-Life provides:

- Specifications and requirements for creating a room
- Door tag to hang outside the door
- Troubleshooting to identify potential spaces
- Visit rooms occasionally to check on condition (no less than 1X per year per room, sometimes more often when major issues arise continuously with a space)
- Provides room signage re: inside the room instructions for maintaining the space and sanitation

Work-Life is unable to maintain and monitor a schedule for room use, supply and stock rooms, and oversee maintenance and upkeep of the rooms.

I don't have a room available, but do have space for a pod. Is that an option?

Yes, the [Mamava](#) Pods are starting to pop up everywhere. Mamava is an external business that sells a variety of portable, freestanding, turnkey, all-in-one lactation pods. While they are super convenient and a quick fix when there is no room option available, they are expensive. For more information check out their website and contact worklife@uky.edu

Who is responsible for cleaning/maintaining/stocking supplies in the lactation room?

Typically, the department/area that is hosting the lactation room is considered the room "owner". Once a room is open, there are **3 main functions** each building/department must determine how to handle, and whether to combine or split these roles:

1. Contact person and access: If the room is locked or require badge or key access, have a convenient onsite contact person to grant access. Examples of responsibilities:

- a. Giving someone access to the room for lactation purposes.
- b. Checking the room periodically just for general maintenance and upkeep and notifying facilities and/or Work-Life if there are needs
- c. Communicating with Work-Life and the people who work in the building when the room is temporarily closed if it is not always accessible.
- d. Receiving occasional email updates from Work-Life
- e. Generally being the point person for that room in that location only
- f. OPTIONAL: in a few buildings, the key contact person organizes an outlook calendar, a sign-up sheet or other way for room users to schedule their time in the room. In most cases, however, this is managed independently by the users of the room. Work-Life does not handle scheduling.

2. Supply and restock of basic consumable supplies including:

- a. Sani-wipes
- b. Gloves
- c. Paper towels
- d. Tissues
- e. Hand soap/hand sanitizer
- f. Dish soap

In most buildings, the restocking can happen with the custodial team during regular cleaning or maintenance. In other buildings the key contact person or department is responsible. Each building must determine what works best for their location.

3. Cleaning room regularly: in nearly all cases, the Lactation Room is added to the regular maintenance schedule for restrooms. Usually an initial walk-through helps the cleaning team understand expectations. The key contact person and Work-Life can do occasional checks for general cleanliness throughout the year. Room users also, almost always, report issues to Work-Life.

Will other employees view lactation support as special treatment?

Working parents needing to take time to express milk are not trying to get out of work, they are trying to balance what is best for their child and their employer. It's not easy and takes a lot of time, coordination, dedication, planning, and support. Studies show that most lactating employees take 2-3 breaks per workday (normally coinciding with already scheduled breaks), for a total time of less than 1 hour. Those needing to express milk also have a regular schedule, making it easier to work around preplanned lactation breaks. If a colleague needs to cover for someone's lactation break, it's not very different from covering for an employee who needs a break for the restroom, to take lunch, or to call home to check on family members.

When should discussion about lactation accommodations take place?

We recommend beginning with an initial conversation prior to an employee going out on leave. A follow-up conversation prior to their return or upon their return will also be beneficial, as plans, needs, and schedules can change.

Does the employee need to be the birthing parent to receive a lactation accommodation?

No. An employee may pump at work regardless of whether they actually gave birth or not. For example, in adoption, parents can induce lactation to feed their adopted child <https://breastfeedingusa.org/content/article/breastfeeding-your-adopted-baby-0>. Other examples include surrogacy and child loss in which the employee may wish to pump and donate their milk. Not all employees will identify as a "mom" or "female", therefore, lactation rooms are for any employee needing to express milk.

I have concerns about an employee's request for a lactation break, how do I get help?

Contact Work-Life worklife@uky.edu to discuss your concerns and begin working on collaborative next steps with Work-Life and your employee. Space and time must be provided, and there are options available to make this easier for everyone involved.

What resources are available to employees regarding lactation?

In addition to the Work-Life, employees can

- Finding support <https://www.uky.edu/hr/thrive/07-18-2014/finding-breastfeeding-support>.
- Resources related to traveling for work and lactation <https://www.uky.edu/hr/thrive/03-20-2018/traveling-for-work-and-breastfeeding>
- UK Insurance coverage for pumps <https://www.uky.edu/hr/thrive/01-31-2020/breast-pumps-uk-insurance-coverage-and-local-suppliers>
- Information on selecting a pump <https://ukhealthcare.uky.edu/obstetrics-gynecology/obstetrics/breastfeeding-support/breast-pumps>

The Office of Work-Life offers an expecting parents' workshop for new, expecting, and adopting parents to hear about leave policies, benefits, lactation support, child care, and more. On the Work-Life website, there are additional resources. Specific questions or concerns can be communicated with the Office of Work-Life at worklife@uky.edu.