Child Care: Frequently Asked Questions

My child care facility doesn't care for infants. How can my facility be breastfeeding-friendly?
You can still provide a breastfeeding-friendly environment, even if you don't have infants directly in your care.

Moms
Between getting kids ready, getting to child care, and going to or from school and work, parents are very busy! Remember that some families may have multiple child care arrangements to meet their individual needs. Knowing that your facility is breastfeeding-friendly makes it easier for mom to plan her day without the added worry of how, when, and where she can feed her baby or express her milk.

Child Care Providers
Employees at breastfeeding-friendly facilities benefit too. Returning to work or school can be a challenging time for breastfeeding moms. Providing your staff with a designated place to feed their baby or express and store milk offers a supportive environment to help them reach their own breastfeeding goals.

My child care center doesn't have a spare room to offer breastfeeding mothers. Does this mean we can't be breastfeeding-friendly?

While having a stand-alone lactation room is nice, it is certainly not necessary. A comfortable chair, an electrical outlet and access to running water nearby are all that is needed to provide moms with a comfortable, sanitary space to breastfeed or express milk. This could be any space, from an infant classroom to the Director's office. Staff should all be trained to show mothers where they can go to feed or pump. NOTE: a bathroom is not considered an acceptable or sanitary space.

Do I need to wear gloves when I feed breastmilk to infants?

It is not necessary to wear gloves when feeding or handling breastmilk. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) agree that breastmilk is not a hazardous bodily fluid and does not require Universal Precautions. Feed bottles of breastmilk the same way that you would feed infant formula. This simplifies the process for your staff and reinforces a welcoming environment for moms to bring milk to your facility.

How much will a breastfed baby eat while in child care?

Babies over six weeks old usually eat three or four ounces about every three hours. Some breastfed babies eat less while they are in child care and make up for it by eating more later with mom. You will soon learn baby's routine and can help mom plan how much milk to bring based on her baby's individual needs.

What do I do if breastmilk spills on the counter or my skin?

Breastmilk is not considered a hazardous bodily fluid and is not a biohazard. If breastmilk spills or comes into contact with your skin, clean up and/or wash your hands as you would after contact with infant formula.

What if a child is fed breastmilk meant for another child?
Although the risk of a disease being transmitted through a single exposure to breastmilk is low, some parents may express concern. The CDC has detailed guidance to address this issue. Also, there should be an assessment of why the wrong milk was given, along with development of a prevention plan that can be shared with parents and staff.

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Sample Child Care Center Breastfeeding Policy

The (Name of Child Care Center) is committed to providing ongoing support to breastfeeding mothers. Well-defined research has documented a multitude of health benefits to both the mother and infant.
The (Name of Child Care Center) subscribes to the following policy:

Breastfeeding mothers shall be provided a place to breastfeed or express their milk.

Breastfeeding mothers, including employees, shall be provided a private and sanitary place to breastfeed their babies or express milk. This area has an electrical outlet, comfortable chair, and nearby access to running water.

A refrigerator will be made available for storage of expressed breastmilk.

Breastfeeding mothers and employees may store their expressed breastmilk in the center's refrigerator. Mothers should provide their own containers, clearly labeled with their child's name and date.

Sensitivity will be shown to breastfeeding mothers and their babies.

The child care center is committed to providing ongoing support to breastfeeding mothers, including an opportunity to breastfeed their baby in the morning and evening, and holding off giving a bottle, if possible, when mom is due to arrive. Artificial baby milks (formula) and solid foods will not be provided unless the mother has requested. Babies will be held closely when feeding and bottles will never be propped.

Staff shall be trained in handling breastmilk.

All child care center staff will be trained in the proper storage and handling of breastmilk, as well as ways to support breastfeeding mothers. The center will follow guidelines from the American Academy of Pediatrics and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to ensure that breastmilk is properly treated to avoid waste. Universal Precautions are not required when handling breastmilk.

Breastfeeding employees shall be provided flexible breaks to accommodate breastfeeding or milk expression.

Breastfeeding employees shall be provided a flexible schedule for breastfeeding or pumping to provide breastmilk for their children. The time allowed would not exceed the normal time allowed for lunch and breaks. For time above and beyond normal lunch and breaks, sick/annual leave must be used, or the employee can come in a little earlier or leave a little later to make up the time.

Breastfeeding promotion information will be displayed.

The center will provide information on breastfeeding, including the names of area resources if any questions or problems arise. In addition, breastfeeding will be promoted and positively portrayed in the center.

Adapted from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, 10 Steps to Breastfeeding-Friendly Child Care Centers.