



Breastfeeding Support in the Workplace

Tips *by* and *for* Johns Hopkins Managers

As a manager or supervisor, you play an important role in an employee's successful transition from maternity leave to work. We asked dozens of managers at Johns Hopkins how they support their employees who breastfeed after they return to work. They provided the suggestions listed below.

Important: discussions between you and your employee about pumping breast milk should take place **before** and **after** her maternity leave. Be sure you revisit the pumping schedule periodically to ensure that the needs of the department and employee are being met as best as possible.

Discuss space available for expressing breast milk.

- Say something like, I want you to know if you choose to breastfeed, Hopkins fully supports you and offers a clean, cozy environment to pump at work. If you want more information, just let me know or call the Office of Work, Life and Engagement at 443-997-7000.
- Know where the closest Mother's Rooms are to your building, where to find the list of all locations, and where to register for access to the rooms. (<http://hopkinsworklife.org/breastfeeding-support>)
- If a Mother's Room is not convenient, provide a private and clean room with a lockable door. Make sure only a few people have a key; otherwise people will walk in regardless of any posted signs.
- Consider offering your own office at set times during the day if administrators are unable to designate a space for pumping. You can schedule a trip for coffee, regular meetings, and other events to vacate the space.
- Do not suggest that the nursing mother pump in the bathroom. This is illegal.

Discuss the work schedule and timing of breaks

- Have a good understanding of time expectations (most nursing moms need 2-3, 15-20 minute breaks to pump); include transportation time to and from the Mother's Room.
- Talk about how to schedule pump time so that the employee knows what's expected and can plan her day accordingly.
- Be honest about any concerns that you may have about the schedule or patient care.
- Discuss the importance of ensuring other staff provide coverage and that break time doesn't conflict with something that can't wait until returning.
- Make clear that pumping time is part of break time and to plan the day accordingly. A few employees want to take an hour break on top of their pumping time, but most nursing mothers are very appreciative and respectful of the time that they are able to pump.
- Breastfeeding mothers often offer to cover a coworker's assignment for an extra 15-20 minutes at lunch if this helps them get to the pump room during their shift.
- Remember that finding coverage for a new mom to pump is just as important as coverage for the employee wanting to leave early to attend a loved one's evening activities.

Open the lines of communication / Guide the employee regarding logistics and etiquette

- Be supportive and encouraging. This can be a very emotional time as well as slightly embarrassing to talk about, especially with a male manager.
- Make sure the employee knows to keep her pump in a safe, clean environment. I had a staff member who placed her pumping bag with a pump inside on the lab floor to store because it wouldn't fit in her locker.
- Discuss etiquette for pumping. For example, expressed milk should be stored in a bag in the refrigerator and shared office space should not be used for pumping unless permission has been given.
- Encourage the use of music or a white noise machine to eliminate the sound of the breast pump.

What to share with co-workers

- Inform staff on a need-to-know basis because some nursing mothers want to keep the information private.
- Manage gossip by communicating about the schedule and space impact on a need-to-know basis.
- Talk to janitorial and facilities staff because they have master keys and may walk in unless they know that it is important not to.
- Tell night staff that they can use one of the private offices on the unit that are not in use in the overnight hours if leaving the unit will be too stressful.
- Encourage your employees to be open and honest. People are more willing to help each other if they know why they are being asked to help.

Share Hopkins' resources available to the employee

- Discuss the WorkLife family support services such as the child care referral program, child care centers, and backup care through Care.com. Discussing these services generally gets employees networked into the lactation resources.
- Encourage attendance at one of the semi-annual Baby Showers to learn more.
(<http://hopkinsworklife.org/baby-shower>)
- Share information about the vending machine for forgotten or missing pump supplies.
(<http://hopkinsworklife.org/breastfeeding-support-vending-machine>)
- Talk about discounted breast pumps from WorkLife. (<http://hopkinsworklife.org/breastfeeding-pumps>)
- Find information about health insurance carriers providing breast pumps to new mothers.
(<http://hopkinsworklife.org/breastfeeding-pumps>)

Please email worklife@jhu.edu if you need assistance handling specific issues regarding breastfeeding employees. You may also request a digital copy of the **Breastfeeding Support Guide for Managers and Supervisors**.