



BREASTFEEDING AND EXPRESSING AT WORK

Return to Work Plan

EMPLOYER AND EMPLOYEE INFORMATION

Employee Name:	Contact:
Employer/Manager Name:	Contact:
Date:	Review Date:

PURPOSE

This form is designed to support open, collaborative conversations between employers and returning staff who wish to continue breastfeeding or expressing at work. It helps both parties create a clear, supportive plan that aligns with New Zealand employment rights and promotes wellbeing in the workplace.

This should be used as a collaborative document and any plans should remain open to change and flexible as the needs of breastfeeding and babies can change.

WHY SUPPORTING BREASTFEEDING IS BENEFICIAL FOR EVERYONE

- Increased employee retention and reduced recruitment costs
- Higher morale and loyalty, especially from staff who feel supported
- Improved productivity due to lower absenteeism.
- Alignment with best practice and workplace wellbeing standards.
- Fulfilment of legal obligations under the Employment Relations Act [1]
- Desirable family friendly workplace culture
- Less absenteeism boosts productivity
- Helps company image and be known as a good place to work
- Arrangements for managing breastfeeding and returning to work are not permanent; each baby's breastfeeding pattern is different and will change over time



BREASTFEEDING AND EXPRESSING AT WORK

Return to Work Plan

UNDERSTANDING LEGISLATION, RIGHTS AND EMPLOYER OBLIGATIONS

In New Zealand, breastfeeding in the workplace is protected by the Employment Relations Amendment Act 2008, which requires employers to provide appropriate facilities and breaks for employees who wish to breastfeed or express milk during work hours, where it is reasonable and practicable.

The Code of 'Employment Practice on Infant Feeding' provides guidance on implementing these requirements.

Employment Relations (Flexible Working Arrangements) Amendment Act 2007 provides employees who have been with their employer for 6 months or more and have young or dependent children the right to request part-time and flexible hours and the employer has a duty to seriously consider such requests.

Under the Human Rights Act 1993 breastfeeding women and people have the right to breastfeed or express breastmilk at work. Employers are required to find ways for employees to do their job and have regular breaks to breastfeed or express milk. Treating a woman or person unfairly because they are breastfeeding or expressing breastmilk is a form of sex discrimination. More information can be found on the [Human Rights Commission website](#) and [this Human Rights Commission flyer](#).

RESOURCES

[Womens Health Action 'Breastfeeding Friendly Resources'](#)

- [For Employees](#)
- [For Employers](#)
- [Understanding the Legislation](#)
- [Employer Tools and Templates](#)

[Employment NZ 'Breastfeeding in the Workplace'](#)

[Te Whatu Ora Health New Zealand 'Guidance on supporting breastfeeding parents returning to work'](#)

[Employment NZ 'Code of employment practice on infant feeding'](#)

[Employment Relations Amendment Act 2008, Part 6C, Sections 69X-Z](#)



BREASTFEEDING AND EXPRESSING AT WORK

Return to Work Plan

RETURN TO WORK PLAN

Proposed return to work date:

BREAKS

Frequency of breaks needed:

You will need to agree on how many breaks for breastfeeding or expressing milk are needed each working day, as well as the length of each break. For example, this could be one 60-minute break, two 30-minute breaks, three 20-minute breaks, or three 30-minute breaks that reduce over time as needed. Flexibility is important.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) recommends at least 90 minutes of paid breastfeeding breaks per working day. However the time required to breastfeed (or express breast milk) will vary between different parents and babies and should be sufficient to ensure the baby is fed adequately. - Employment NZ 'Breastfeeding in the workplace'

PLAN

1. How many breaks will be needed when returning to work?

2. It can be helpful to discuss the long term timeframes and plans while keeping a flexible and open mindset for change. E.G "I expect to be feeding three times a day for the next 3 months and then probably twice per day for 6 months."

Plunket recommends that the overall duration of arrangements around breastfeeding or expressing breast milk at work is left open-ended, as it is difficult (and even unhelpful) to try to estimate the number of months a woman and her baby may require for breastfeeding.

3. Will these be paid breaks? If an employee and employer agree, breastfeeding breaks can be paid but this is not a legal requirement.

☐ Yes ☐ No



BREASTFEEDING AND EXPRESSING AT WORK

Return to Work Plan

FACILITIES

Use this section to identify an appropriate space and ensure the needed facilities are available. To ensure privacy, windows or glass walls may need to be screened.

- What option/s have been identified in the workplace for a private, clean, quiet, warm room or space. E.G A screened off area, a private meeting room that can be booked/reserved with a lockable door, a personal office with a lockable door (spaces don't need to be sterile, just clean)
- Note: Toilets are not appropriate and should not be considered. Toilets are not only unsanitary, but are also inappropriate for some cultures.

CHECKLIST

- | | |
|--|--|
| • Privacy | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| • Clean | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| • Low comfortable chair | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| • A powerpoint (If using electric pump) | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| • Lockable door | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| • A washbasin | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| • A fridge/Communal Fridge (or chilly bin with icepacks) | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| • A table | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| • A clean space to store equipment | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |



BREASTFEEDING AND EXPRESSING AT WORK

Return to Work Plan

OTHER SUPPORT

Combining breastfeeding and work isn't always easy for an employee. Having a supportive boss and workmates is essential.

This support can be as simple as ensuring that people don't make inappropriate remarks or jokes and that they are co-operative about any temporary work changes made to accommodate breastfeeding.

Support could include:

- making sure other staff know the workplace is breastfeeding-friendly and, if necessary, encouraging tolerance around any additional noise or disruption associated with having a baby at work
- making sure the employee is comfortable with the arrangements and is able to raise any issues
- checking with the employee every so often to make sure arrangements are working effectively
- making sure any caregiver, partner and baby is welcome in the workplace.

SMALL BUSINESSES

Small businesses can face challenges when considering initiatives to support breastfeeding, especially if you are working in a confined space.

Some creative ideas that other small employers have used:

- If you can't provide the space, can you provide the time e.g. flexible working hours, reduced hours, longer lunch hours and working from home?
- Make one or more offices available at intervals during the day. They might need blinds installed for privacy, or a comfy chair added
- A number of different businesses in a mall, or in the vicinity of a mall, or in a single building, could pool resources to lease and equip a family room for staff
- If a room isn't available, look at the different spaces you have and consider whether anything could be reorganised or stored off-site to create a suitable space, even if only temporarily
- Use screens and 'do not disturb' notices to make a cubicle private

SUPPORT FOR YOU

The above information, guidance, support and ideas are available at:

[Employment NZ 'Breastfeeding in the Workplace'](#)

[Womens Health Action 'Breast Friendly Workplaces.'](#)