

Returning to Work and Lactation Accommodations

Your rights to pump and express milk are legally protected

The [Revised Code of Washington 43.10.005](#) & [Federal Fair Labor Standards Act Section 7](#) requires that employers provide breastfeeding employees:

- A flexible schedule to pump, attend medical appointments, and have reasonable accommodations
- A convenient private location to express milk that's not a bathroom and a space to safely store milk
- 2 years of protected reasonable accommodations

If you are an employer or employee in need of guidance on pregnancy and lactation accommodations, reach out to the [Washington State Office of the Attorney General](#) for help (web page available in 18 languages).

- **Can't find answers to your specific questions?** Reach out to pregnancy@atg.wa.gov or call (833) 389-2427 for guidance
- [Pregnancy & Lactation Accommodations Complaint Form](#)

Resources for working parents

The Women, Infants, and Children Nutrition Program (WIC)

WIC is a place where working families can get healthy food, lactation support and support navigating returning to work and pumping. WIC is for pregnant people, new and breastfeeding/chestfeeding parents, and children under 5. Almost half of all babies in our state are on WIC.

[Find out if you're eligible.](#)

There are over 200 WIC clinics across Washington State. To find a WIC clinic near you:

- Call the Help Me Grow WA Hotline 1-800-322-2588
- Text "WIC" to 96859
- [Visit ParentHelp123's ResourceFinder](#)

WIC helps improve the health of families through:

- Nutrition education
- Breastfeeding support

- Healthy foods
- Health screenings and referrals

[Ideas on where to pump and creative solutions for employers having trouble finding lactation space.](#)

How much time do employees need to pump?

Employees will need flexible accommodations for pumping because medical accommodations aren't a one size fits all situation. Consider the following factors for time: the average time it takes to pump is between 15-20 minutes, assuming they aren't experiencing maternal or infant challenges which would increase the time for a medical reasonable accommodation. Time for travel, setup and cleanup also needs to be factored in, per the law. This may make an entire pump break 30-40 minutes, assuming the location for pumping is conveniently located.

A person who is nursing will need to express milk as frequently as their own baby eats, which may be every 2-3 hours during the workday. Employers are not required to pay employees for additional time outside the mandatory 15-minute paid breaks but employers are required to give a flexible schedule to accommodate their medical needs.

Need extra time to pump or additional medical leave?

Find out if you qualify for [Paid Family & Medical Leave](#) (available in 16 languages).

Pumps and lactation support are covered by insurance through the Affordable Care Act

Pumps:

[Medicaid](#), [WIC](#), and [private insurance](#) cover pumps for a variety of needs. Learn more [here](#).

If you need support around expressing milk, reach out to a trusted health care provider, [lactation consultant](#), [WIC](#), [La Leche League](#), or [local lactation coalition](#) for help. There are many people to support and help you in your journey! A properly fitting pump that fits your needs can help you reach your infant feeding goals.

Lactation support:

Health insurance plans must provide breastfeeding support, counseling, and equipment for the duration of breastfeeding. These services may be provided before and after birth. Learn more at [healthcare.gov](#).

What does my insurance cover?

To figure out your coverage, call the number on the back of your insurance card and ask the following questions:

- What breastfeeding-related benefits does my plan offer?
- Do I need a prescription from my doctor for my pump?
- Can I request or buy the pump before my baby is born?
- What types of pumps are covered?
- Can I get a specific brand of pump?
- Do I need to buy or rent my breast pump from a certain supplier (i.e., from a specific pharmacy, retailer, or medical supply company)?
- How will I purchase this pump? (i.e. out of pocket with reimbursement, ask what the steps are for reimbursement)
- Is rental of an electric pump covered?

Need help finding a lactation consultant or getting peer-to-peer support?

[Find a credentialed lactation consultant in your area](#) or visit our [Lactation Support resource](#).

Your milk is food, not a biohazard

Many factors can affect how long your milk can be stored safely. Such factors include milk volume, room temperature when milk is expressed, temperature fluctuations in the refrigerator and freezer, and cleanliness of the environment. Learn more about how to [safely express and store](#) your milk.

Human milk is not a tissue and cannot spread illness in communal refrigerators. In fact, human milk [is full of antiviral and antimicrobial](#) elements that make it the perfect food for your baby. Learn more from the US Department of Labor and the Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) on the [safety of expressed milk](#).

Additional resources for returning to work while pumping:

- National [Breastfeeding Helpline](#) **1-800-994-9662**
- [Business Case for Breastfeeding](#)
- [Going Back to Work \(WIC\)](#)
- [Encourage your employer to print door hangers](#)



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