

BREASTFEEDING/ CHESTFEEDING WHEN RETURNING TO WORK OR SCHOOL

When you return to work or school, it is possible to continue breastfeeding*. Breastfeeding is important to the health of you and your child and is a protected right under [The Ontario Human Rights Commission](#).

* The terms breastmilk/breastfed/breastfeeding are widely used but human milk/chestfed/chestfeeding can be used interchangeably.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTINUED BREASTFEEDING

Health Canada and national associations, such as Canadian Paediatric Society and Dietitians of Canada, all recommend that babies are exclusively breastfed for the first six months of life. This means no other foods or liquids, other than a vitamin D supplement are provided, unless medically needed. Once solid foods are introduced, continued breastfeeding is recommended for up to two years of age and beyond.

BENEFITS OF HUMAN MILK

Breastfeeding protects both child health and the health of the breastfeeding individual. Many of the protective effects of breastfeeding are dose related. This means the longer you continue to breastfeed or provide human milk, the greater the protective effect is for you and your child.

Breastfeeding supports cognitive development and decreases a child's risk of:

- Sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)
- Diarrhea
- Ear and lung infections

Breastfeeding also helps provide emotional support to children and supports growth and development by providing a valuable source of nutrients, including protein and healthy fats (omega-3 fatty acids) as well as some vitamins and minerals.

Individuals who breastfeed also benefit from protective factors that increase over time and are less likely to experience:

- Breast and ovarian cancer
- Type 2 diabetes
- Heart disease

Breastfeeding is also cost-effective, protects the environment and is always available.

PUBLIC HEALTH

1-800-361-5653

TTY: 1-866-512-6228

york.ca/breastfeeding

Did you know?

Parents take less time off work or school to care of sick children because children who continue to receive human milk get sick less often!

OPTIONS FOR CONTINUED BREASTFEEDING

The following are several ways to continue breastfeeding or provide expressed milk after returning to work or school:

- Have a family member or friend bring your child to work or school to be breastfed. Employers and schools must accommodate this since breastfeeding is a protected human right
- Express your milk at work or school and store it in a refrigerator or insulated cooler with ice packs. When you are not with your child, expressed milk can still be offered
- Breastfeeding your child at home, before and after work, if you choose not to breastfeed or express your milk at work or school. Your milk supply will adjust based on how often you breastfeed or express. However, if your milk supply decreases, it may be difficult to increase it again later

BREASTFEEDING IS A PROTECTED RIGHT

The Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) states that you have the right to breastfeed your child or express your milk while at work or school. To learn more about this human right, refer to ohrc.on.ca.

Your employer must:

- Protect and support your right to breastfeed and express your milk
- Allow enough time to breastfeed or express milk during your work hours. This time is not counted as break time. You are not expected to miss regular meal breaks or work additional time to make up for time taken to breastfeed or express milk.
- Provide a clean and private space for you to breastfeed or express milk

TIPS WHEN RETURNING TO WORK OR SCHOOL

A few weeks before you return:

- Find out if your workplace has a policy that supports breastfeeding or expressing human milk
- Talk to your employer about your schedule and how they can accommodate your plans to breastfeed or express your milk during work hours
- Speak to other parents who have returned to work about their experience
- Learn how to express milk by hand or pump and practice expressing your milk. Refer to our [Storing expressed breastmilk](#) resource
- If you receive Ontario Works or Ontario Disability Support Program benefits, you may be eligible to receive funding to rent or purchase a breast pump, if needed. Refer to our [Breast pump discretionary benefit](#) resource for more information

While at work or school:

- Wear a supportive and comfortable bra or undergarment
- Express your milk, including hand expression, when you feel full or uncomfortable. This may be about every three to five hours (depending upon the age of your child)
- Expect it may take days or weeks for your milk supply to adjust to the amount of milk being removed
- If there is not a fridge to store your expressed milk, consider purchasing an insulated cooler bag with ice packs to store your milk safely until you return home

ADDITIONAL TIPS FOR CONTINUED BREASTFEEDING

- Breastfeed right before you leave the house and when you are reunited with your child
- Your child may want to breastfeed again later. Follow their cues to know how often
- When you first return to work or school, your child may want to breastfeed more often at night. This will likely be short term as your child adjusts to a new routine
- If you will not be directly breastfeeding your child at school or at work, have your child practice feeding in another way. If you offer a bottle, refer to our [Bottle feeding](#) resource to learn how to bottle feed safely. From six months onwards and with support, an open cup can be introduced. While spill-free cups are an option, drinking from an open cup is an important feeding skill to learn
- By 18 months, offer expressed milk and any other beverage by open cup. Using a bottle or sippy cup past 18 months may lead to [early childhood caries](#)

SELECTING A CHILD CARE PROVIDER THAT SUPPORTS CONTINUED BREASTFEEDING

When selecting a daycare or preschool, choose a child care provider who:

- Understands and supports the importance of breastfeeding
- Encourages and promotes feeding your child onsite at drop-off, pick-up or even during work or school breaks
- Implements proper storage, handling and feeding of expressed milk to your child in your absence
- Has a policy and provides staff training on how to store and offer expressed milk
- Promotes breastfeeding-friendly practices and environments

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO BREASTFEED ANYWHERE, ANYTIME!

Remember, breastfeeding and expressing milk at work, school or in public is a human right in Ontario.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For additional information about breastfeeding and expressing milk, including resources and videos, visit york.ca/breastfeeding.

For other information about feeding babies and young children or other public health topics related to parenting, visit york.ca/feedingkids or york.ca/parenting.

HEALTH CONNECTION: Connect with one of our public health nurses for free, confidential information, advice and resources, Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Call: 1-800-361-5653 (after hours, leave a message, we will contact you during operating hours)

Live chat: york.ca/NurseChat

TTY: 1-866-512-6228

Or visit york.ca/HealthConnection

You can also call 811 to speak with a registered nurse 24/7 or chat live at ontario.ca/health811

911 is always the first number you should call during emergency situations. If you're worried for your health or that of your child, call 911 or visit your nearest emergency room.



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