

Making breastfeeding best for women working outside the home

February 29 2016, by Olivia Mccoy

The health advantages of exclusive breastfeeding have been documented and reported for both mothers and children. According to a 2014 report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, nationally 79 percent of infants had ever been breastfed and 49 percent were breastfeeding at six months. The same report showed, in Kentucky, 61 percent of infants were ever breastfed and only 32 percent were breastfeeding at six months. The goal standard is to increase the proportion of infants that are breastfeeding at six months; with planning and support from the community those rates can improve.

Many mothers are aware of the benefits of [breastfeeding](#) however, they encounter significant barriers that decrease their chances of initiating breastfeeding or continuing until the recommended six months. Working outside the home can be one of those barriers and is related to a shorter duration of breastfeeding. Low-income women are more likely than their higher-income counterparts to return to work earlier and to be engaged in jobs that make it challenging for them to continue breastfeeding.

"Baby-Friendly" facilities work to teach new moms to initiate breastfeeding and Mommy and Me Workshops focus on educating women during the two weeks following delivery. There are some steps women can take to maintain breastfeeding while working outside the home.

Recognizing additional challenges that women working outside the home may have, makes it increasingly important to support their breastfeeding

goals. Some women know early in their pregnancy they will work outside the home after delivery; this knowledge allows new moms to plan their return to the workplace. Storing breastmilk is a key step to continuing breastfeeding.

A few weeks before returning to the workplace mothers can begin freezing breastmilk, labeling bottles with the date so older bottles can be used first. In a standard freezer, milk is usable for three months after bottling. A breast pump is the most important tool in the process of creating your own "milk bank," most health insurances cover the cost of pumps; Medicaid recipients also receive this benefit through the local health department. Teaching the baby to drink breastmilk from a bottle is a process that should begin a few weeks before returning to work and family members can help in this. Additionally, the goal to pump breastmilk should be discussed with employers to accommodate the best times and place to pump. Finally, the goal of continuing breastfeeding should be discussed with child care providers.

Commitment to providing women with the support that they need to achieve their infant feeding intention is a collective effort. When we come together to protect every mother's right to breastfeed, as long as she and her baby desired, we'll begin to see a positive change in the health of our nation.

Provided by University of Kentucky

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