

Breastfeeding and Child Care



Breastfeeding is normal for babies up to 12 months and beyond, and mothers can successfully breastfeed after they return to work or school. With the right support and information, you can continue to breastfeed for as long as you and your baby wish.

Benefits of breastfeeding when your baby is in a child care program

If you breastfeed after returning to school or work:

- Your baby is likely to have fewer illnesses.
- Your baby will have less risk for allergies, obesity, gastrointestinal problems, respiratory diseases and ear infections.
- You and your baby will enjoy the comfort, close bond and other emotional benefits that come with breastfeeding.

How to continue to breastfeed when you are away from your baby

When you aren't with your baby, your baby's caregiver can give your breastmilk to your baby from a bottle. This means you will have to express milk (by hand and/or by pump) while at work or school and bring the milk to the child care program. If your child care program is near where you work or go to school, you can breastfeed right before work, at lunch, during breaks and right after work.

Child care programs that support breastfeeding families

Many child care programs welcome breastfeeding families. Ask about the program's policies and experience with breastfeeding. Make sure the caregivers know, or are willing to learn, how to handle breastmilk safely and are supportive of breastfeeding. Visit the program to see if there is a quiet place with a comfortable chair where you can breastfeed your baby.

How long can I continue to breastfeed?

Your baby will start to eat solid food at about 6 months. This is the beginning of the gradual weaning process. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that you keep breastfeeding after your baby starts eating solid foods until at least 12 months of age and for as long as you and your baby wish after that.

You may continue to bring breastmilk to the program after your baby is 12 months old. Child care programs that participate in the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) are allowed to give breastmilk instead of cow's milk in the meal pattern to children over 12 months.

Tips for a successful breastfeeding routine

- Breastfeed your baby when you are together; before work, at home and at the child care program.
- Express breastmilk at work or school for the next day's feeding at child care.
- Bring breastmilk to the child care program every day.
- Label bottles with your baby's name and the date the milk was expressed.
- Keep breastmilk chilled in a portable ice chest when storing and transporting it.
- If you find your milk supply diminishing, seek expert help (from a lactation consultant, a WIC office, La Leche League etc.) as soon as possible. The sooner a problem is addressed, the easier it is to solve.