

Supporting Breast Feeding

Breast milk is the best first food for babies, and the only one they need for around the first six months of life. Breastfeeding is often challenging when a mom returns to work and is away from her baby for a long stretch of time. Responsive feeding is critical when a baby is fed breast milk, because mom's body works hard to produce just the right amount of milk a baby needs while away from her. If a baby is fed too much while at child care, mom's supply of breast milk might not be able to keep up. She may stop breastfeeding before she wants to -or- add formula when this should not have been necessary.

Here are some ways to support breastfeeding moms and babies in your program:

- Breastfed babies may need to eat more frequently than formula-fed babies. Breast milk is digested more quickly than formula, so babies get hungry more quickly. Expect to feed a breastfed baby every 2-3 hours.
- Breastfed babies may initially have trouble with bottles. Drinking from a breast and drinking from a bottle are very different—the feel of the nipple, the speed of the flow, and the mechanics of sucking. Be patient with babies who are not used to the bottle.
- Invite mom to breastfeed at drop off and pickup, in the classroom or another area in which she feels comfortable. More direct nursing and less bottle-feeding is good for mom, baby and keeping up mom's supply of breast milk. And, if you participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), you can now receive reimbursement for an infant meal, even when mom breastfeeds on site!
- Talk with parents daily at drop off and pick up about how baby has been feeding. If they usually send bottles with 4 oz of expressed breast milk each, and baby isn't finishing them, tell them to try sending 3.5 oz bottles. Invite parents to send an extra few ounces in a spare bottle, and you can offer an extra ounce or more if baby is still hungry after finishing a bottle.
- Use a daily sheet to communicate with parents about the time and amount of feedings.
- Make an agreement with parents about feeding their breastfed baby.
 - Babies who receive only breast milk should never be given formula, even if you think they are hungry. Always consult the parent—call if you are concerned.
 - If mom plans to breastfeed at pickup, baby will likely be hungry around that time every day. Agree on a plan with mom for how to address this situation.

RESOURCES

Want to learn more about supporting breastfeeding moms in your program?

- Here is a link to a video sponsored by the Breastfeeding Coalition of Oregon and the Indian Perinatal Network that provides a series of helpful strategies.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lpDDxnbin7c&feature=youtu.be>
- Here is an online course on supporting breastfeeding, hosted by Better Kid Care:
<https://extension.psu.edu/programs/betterkidcare/lessons/childhood-obesity-prevention-lmcc-2013-support-infant-feeding>