

GRAB AND GO LESSON

Special Support for the Breastfeeding Family

Topic Area: Nutrition and Meal Management
Subtopic Area: Infant Feeding

Objective: Recall three benefits for supporting breastfeeding families in child care settings.

During the first six months of life, or as developmentally appropriate, breastmilk is the best milk for healthy growth and development. It contains the right amount of fats, vitamins, protein, and other essential nutrients. However, less than half of breastfeeding mothers exclusively breastfeed their infants during this timeframe, and these rates vary significantly by age, race, and culture.

There are numerous reasons why mothers choose to stop breastfeeding. For example, some lack support from their families, workplace, or medical professionals. Others decide to stop because of cultural norms or concerns regarding their infant's health. Child care professionals can help mothers to exclusively breastfeed for the first six months by understanding the benefits and creating a supportive environment.

What are some benefits for infants, mothers, and child care professionals?

Breastfeeding benefits infants in the following ways:

- Provides easily digestible food, which results in fewer stomach aches
- Provides a perfect balance of nutrients for healthy growth and development
- Protects against common illnesses and allergies, including asthma
- May lower the risk of obesity, Type 1 and 2 diabetes, heart disease, and childhood cancers

Breastfeeding benefits mothers in the following ways:

- Fosters a bond between the mother and infant
- Saves money on the cost of formula
- May help mothers to more easily return to their pre-pregnancy weight
- May lower a mother's risk of Type 2 diabetes and some forms of cancer

Breastfeeding benefits child care professionals in the following ways:

- Breastmilk is creditable in the CACFP in two ways: mothers may provide pumped breastmilk or breastfeed their infant on-site
- May expand marketing opportunities to recruit mothers who choose to breastfeed
- Creates a breastfeeding-friendly environment
- Demonstrates the use of evidence-based best practices



What are three ways child care professionals can support mothers who choose to breastfeed?

#1: Create a breastfeeding-friendly policy. A policy outlines your commitment to supporting breastfeeding mothers.

#2: Provide a private and sanitary space with a door and sign for mothers to breastfeed or pump (express). The breastfeeding space could include an accessible electrical outlet, a comfortable chair, and a hard surface, such as countertop or small table. Also, provide mothers with access to a sink with water and a space in the refrigerator and freezer for storing pumped milk. For additional information on creating these spaces, refer to the American Academy of Pediatricians (AAP) or Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines to ensure proper handling and storage of breastmilk.

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#3: Train staff on how to create a breastfeeding-friendly environment. They should have the necessary skills to provide a safe and sanitary environment for mothers to breastfeed or pump breastmilk. Key training areas should include:

- Sound methods for showing sensitivity to both breastfeeding and non-breastfeeding mothers
- Communication strategies for discussing breastfeeding with families
- Best practices for managing the breastfeeding space
- Safety practices for managing pumped breastmilk

These three areas help to make mothers feel more comfortable breastfeeding in the child care setting. Also, they ensure that the staff is knowledgeable about how to meet the mother's and infant's needs. Trained staff know the importance of breastfeeding and how to welcome interested mothers.

Moreover, providing breastmilk to infants benefits the infants in your care, their families, and your program. By making your program breastfeeding-friendly, you can help families to continue providing the best nutrition and attention to their children. For additional information, refer to the *Infant Grab and Go Lesson: Successfully and Safely Feeding Breastmilk in the Child Care Setting for Handling and Storing Breastmilk*.

References:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2018). *Proper storage and preparation of breast milk*. Retrieved from www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/recommendations/handling_breastmilk.htm

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