



Health and Family Benefits

Dear Reader:

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We hope this information will be useful to you; reference to it will assist you with many of the questions that will arise in your tenure with municipal government. However, the *Tennessee Code Annotated* and other relevant laws or regulations should always be consulted before any action is taken based upon the contents of this document.

Please feel free to contact us if you have questions or comments regarding this information or any other MTAS website material.

Sincerely,

The University of Tennessee
Municipal Technical Advisory Service
1610 University Avenue
Knoxville, TN 37921-6741
865-974-0411 phone
865-974-0423 fax
www.mtas.tennessee.edu

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Health Benefits for the Family

Breast milk contains antibodies that protect the baby from illnesses including: gastrointestinal disease, respiratory infections, asthma, obesity, type I and type II diabetes and childhood leukemia. In addition to the benefits breast-feeding offers babies, it offers mothers a reduction in risk for type II diabetes, breast cancer, ovarian cancer and postpartum depression. A healthier baby and mom means both parents can be at work and productive, which seems like a welcome benefit for the employer.

Workplace Challenges

Mothers who choose to breast-feed face significant challenges when returning to work after the birth of a child. The commitment to feed a child breast milk requires working mothers to express breast milk at regular intervals throughout the day and properly store the milk for the baby's consumption. This is generally done with an electric pump that can be carried in a simple backpack. Expressing milk at work can be particularly challenging for mothers who travel or have limited opportunities to express milk while at work. Women who don't have adequate milk expressing options may often consider taking longer leaves, reducing their hours or even quitting their jobs. An employer can maximize the opportunity for a smooth transition back to work by providing an environment that supports breast-feeding mothers.

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