

Pregnancy Toolkit



Breastfeeding while working

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life followed by breastfeeding with complementary foods until at least 12 months old. This can seem daunting for the working mother, especially a busy interventional radiologist; however, it is possible.

Pumping breaks are mandated by law. Section 7 (r) of the Fair Labor Standards Act, “Break Time for Nursing Mothers Provision,” requires employers to provide “reasonable break time for an employee to express breast milk for her nursing child for one year after the child’s birth each time such employee has need to express the milk.” Employers are also required to provide “a place, other than a bathroom, that is shielded from view and free from intrusion from coworkers and the public, which may be used by an employee to express breast milk.” The law does not require the employer to compensate the employee during the break time.

Specific state laws may vary. These guides are available for review per state on the U.S. Breastfeeding Committee website (usbreastfeeding.org), among other federal sources.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services website is also a helpful tool for additional information regarding breastfeeding after returning to work. There is information regarding the amount of time that the law recognizes as “break time for nursing mothers,” which according to Business Case for Breastfeeding (womenshealth.gov/breastfeeding/breastfeeding-home-work-and-public/breastfeeding-and-going-back-work/business-case) program, is usually around 30 minutes.

Employees are expected to provide their own pump equipment, storage containers and cleaning supplies. However, employers should include a sink and refrigerator in or near the pump station. If the employer refuses to comply with the law, complaints may be filed to the Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division.

Even though we are entitled to time and space to pump, the logistics of a busy interventional radiology practice can make this difficult. Schedule around your cases and plan when and how often you will need to pump in order to have enough milk for your baby when you are away. You almost always have time between cases while the room is being turned over and the patient prepped to do a quick pump. If you know you have a long case coming up then you might need to pump a little earlier than you normally would so as not to wait too long. If you are delayed in pumping you might leak through your scrubs. (You are not alone—others have been there.)

Your pumping time gives you a little break in your day to think about your little one, take a deep breath and relax, or on certain days multitask, dictating or catching up on paperwork. It’s not easy but it is very doable to be a full-time interventional radiologist mom who breastfeeds/pumps for her desired length of time.

Takeaways:

1. Federal law requires employers to provide reasonable break time for an employee to express breast milk for nursing a child for one year after childbirth.
2. Employers are required to provide “a place, other than a bathroom, that is shielded from view and free from intrusions.”
3. Successful breastfeeding/pumping while working requires planning around your schedule but is doable.

Additional resources

- United States Department of Labor. [dol.gov/whd/nursingmothers/sec7rflsa_btnm.htm](https://www.dol.gov/whd/nursingmothers/sec7rflsa_btnm.htm).
- United States Breastfeeding Committee. usbreastfeeding.org.
- The United States Department of Health and Human Services. [hhs.gov/programs/index.html](https://www.hhs.gov/programs/index.html).
- United States Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division. [dol.gov/whd](https://www.dol.gov/whd).
- The United States Department of Health and Human Services.

[womenshealth.gov/breastfeeding/breastfeeding-home-work-and-public/breastfeeding-and-going-back-work/business-case](https://www.womenshealth.gov/breastfeeding/breastfeeding-home-work-and-public/breastfeeding-and-going-back-work/business-case).