



# Breastfeeding at work

## Facts for the employer

For the compatibility of family and career during the breastfeeding period, mutual understanding and adaptability of employers and employee is required. Breastfeeding or expressing breast milk works even better if at the workplace, it is widely accepted and an adapted infrastructure is available.

The Swiss Society for Paediatrics (SGP) supports the recommendation of the World Health Organization (WHO) that exclusive breastfeeding for six months is a desired goal. Continued breastfeeding parallel to the introduction of complementary foods is recommended for as long as mother and child wish.

Breastfeeding has many health benefits for mother and child. **Breastfed children are sick less often, this leads to fewer absences of parents in the workplace.** It has been clearly shown that

- the risk of infections of the lower respiratory tract in children less than one year are reduced by breastfeeding by over 70%,
- breastfed children have less ear infections and less gastrointestinal infections, and are later less likely to develop obesity and type 2 diabetes mellitus,
- the risk for mothers to developing breast cancer are reduced and she is back to her normal weight faster.

### In Switzerland, there are several requirements by the labour law concerning breastfeeding and expressing breast milk:

- During his first year of life, breastfeeding the child at work or expressing breast milk is considered as paid working time (*Art. 60, ArGV1*):
  - at least 30 minutes up to a working time of 4 hours
  - at least 60 minutes with a working time over 4 hours
  - 90 minutes with a working time over 7 hours

These times can be drawn in one piece or distributed according to the physiological needs of the child. These regulations are only minimum amounts, which are to be credited as paid working time. Should the child require longer periods of breastfeeding for physiological reasons, the breastfeeding mother may also be absent from work for longer periods (see also Article 35a ArG). Unless otherwise agreed between the employer and the employee, the time required in excess of the stipulated minimums shall not be credited as paid working time. Such an agreement may also provide for a reduction of the daily working time. (*Extract from the SECO Guidelines to Regulation 1*)

- The time required may be neither forward nor rescheduled; it may not be withdrawn from other rest periods such as holidays. (*Art. 35a, Abs. 2 ArG*)
- The company must provide a suitable room with a comfortable chair. (*Art. 34 ArGV3*)

Not subject to the labour law are public administrations and the agriculture sector - they have their own laws, which often contain identical or similar provisions in relation to breastfeeding. Management positions are also exempt from the provisions set out in the labour code (*Art. 2 und 3 ArG*).



Desirable are employers who are happy about the pregnancy of an employee and support their desire to breastfeed the child, who offer a program for a smooth return to work and offer help to organize during the first year. This encourages the woman to face up to the challenging questions, to develop workable solutions and see the employer as a trustful partner, if new questions emerge.

To combine family and work is a great achievement.

For you, as an employer, family-friendly structures are worth the extra effort:

- You increase your attractiveness as an employer - a key success factor in view of the increasing demand for professionals.
- You retain qualified, skilled and well-integrated personnel easier and longer. Long-term employees are carriers of the knowhow and valuable support for the company.
- They lower the cost of recruitment. Companies that incorporate new employees are likely to see significant cost until the person can use their services fully and the necessary knowhow acquired for their specific task.
- They facilitate the mothers after maternity leave to return to the.
- They promote the loyalty of mothers towards the company.
- They improve the working environment and increase the motivation of employees.
- They reduce absenteeism and increase productivity.
- A relaxed family life is important for mothers and fathers, and affects the performance of the employees. Therefore, men also appreciate flexible working hours or part-time individual models.

For the parents the first year of their child is a very special situation. In this phase, mothers (and fathers) are particularly challenged. For the compatibility of family and career during the breastfeeding period, mutual understanding and adaptability of employers and employee is required. Breastfeeding or expressing breast milk works even better if at the workplace, it is widely accepted and an adapted infrastructure is available.

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