



## Breastfeeding for Healthier Babies

By Janet D. Lawson, M.D., F.A.C.O.G.

**Dear Dr. Lawson:**

***I know breastfeeding is good for babies, but I work in a fast-food restaurant, and there is no way I can feed my baby at work or even pump my milk at work. Sometimes I don't even get a break! Isn't breastfeeding impossible for women like me?***

***--Shannon, Tyler, TX***

Dear Shannon:

Returning to work is one of the main reasons women choose not to breastfeed. But there are options available to you and me that working mothers did not have until recent years. There are excellent manual and electric breast pumps available now for purchase or renting, and these kits are affordable.

Many women continue to breastfeed after returning to work. I did. Breastmilk acts as your baby's first immunization to help prevent illness. This is especially important if your baby is in a child-care facility. Working moms also cherish the quiet, special moments with their babies that breastfeeding

provides, especially important when you are separated for most of the day.

Since the nature of your job provides you no opportunity to pump your milk at work, I recommend the following:

- 1) Breastfeed your baby as often as you can when you are together. This is *crucial* if you are to keep up your milk supply. Your body will adjust to your schedule and produce the amount of milk your baby needs
- 2) Try pumping your milk immediately before and after work. Label and date pumped milk and give to your child-care provider with instructions to feed your baby on demand, using the oldest milk first.
- 3) Check with your pediatrician for which formula would be best for your baby. Let the childcare provider give your baby a bottle of formula during the day if needed, but request breastmilk be given first.

This way your baby continues to get protection from your milk to help prevent illness. Remember, any amount of breastmilk you give your baby is better than none at all.

If you are pregnant or planning to start a family, you owe it to your children to learn everything you can about the benefits of breastfeeding. Call the State WIC office at 1-800-942-3678 for breastfeeding information. If you are a new mom and need immediate help or assistance with breastfeeding, call the Texas breastfeeding helpline at 1-800-514-6667.

*Dr. Lawson is the Medical Consultant for Title X, Texas Department of State Health Services.*