

Applies to: All Students, Faculty, Staff, Trainees and Visitors at Washington University School of Medicine and Outside Contractors/Vendors

GUIDELINES:

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PURPOSE:

To establish guidelines and standards to facilitate the understanding of what the University requires of their lactation room design standards among professionals commissioned by Washington University to design facilities.

Purpose of Lactation Room

To provide a safe, welcoming place for nursing mothers to pump milk or breastfeed.

PROCESS:

SUMMARY

Mothers who return to the workplace after childbirth are determined to provide for their new babies and also to be productive members of the workforce. Washington University School of Medicine is committed to providing lactation rooms in the workplace to help these employees achieve both of these goals. The following best practices given here will supply lactation rooms that are easy to use, welcoming and comforting to mothers.

BACKGROUND

The increase of women in the workplace starting in the 1960s was partly due to the development of infant formula, which gave nursing mothers added freedom to return to work after childbirth. However, in the past 40 years, research findings overwhelmingly in favor of breast milk over formula have instigated a marked increase in the number of mothers choosing to nurse their children for the first year of life or longer ¹.

Today, breastfeeding is a choice many mothers are making, as it results in significant health, economic and environmental benefits for the mother and child. Breast milk is an infant's normal food and contains numerous nutrients that are necessary to help babies grow into strong and healthy toddlers. According to the National Institutes of Health ², the nutrients in breast milk can also help protect your infant against some common childhood illnesses and infection.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of a baby's life, followed by breastfeeding in combination with the introduction of complementary foods until at least twelve months of age ³.

The remarkable health benefits for mother and infant have prompted these mothers to dedicate long and tedious hours to pumping and storing breast milk when they are not with their babies. Many of these mothers return to work after just 6 to 12 weeks, and they need a dedicated place where they can comfortably and efficiently collect and store breast milk in the workplace ¹.

ROOM REQUIREMENTS

Several times a day, a nursing mother needs to retreat to a quiet, closed room to collect expressed milk. She needs a calm restful environment with all the required elements for an efficient and safe pumping session. A typical pumping session includes changing clothes, sitting at a desk in front of a pump for 15 to 30 minutes, placing milk in storage bottles, washing bottles and pump parts and packing them away until the next pumping session, and redressing and returning to work. At the end of the session, the pumped milk must be stored in a refrigerator or cooler. In an eight-hour work day, two or three pumping sessions are normal.

Other considerations for lactation rooms include the need for actual and perceived privacy. Pumps can be noisy so sound dampening is important to achieve auditory comfort in and around the space. Walls, doors, and locks must be substantial and provide a good sense of security.

Lactation rooms should provide, at a minimum, a lockable door; a work surface and chair; a small utility-type sink; storage for cleaning supplies and paper towels; adequate HVAC service, including a thermostat; and well-placed electrical outlets.

Telephone service and network connections for the room are also recommended to increase worker safety and productivity. Accessibility guidelines should be met for all the features of the room.

Size

A minimum footprint of 7 feet by 7 feet is recommended as it allows for a 5-foot radius circle with 24-inch deep counters on two walls. Other configurations such as 10 feet by 5 feet work well, too.

Location

Lactation rooms should be located in a safe area accessible to all. They should not be located in areas that would not be suitable for the preparation and storage of food.

Privacy

Install a user-operated deadbolt for privacy. The best locks are indicator dead bolts that display an “occupied” message to discourage interruptions.

Sound Privacy

Walls should reach up to the structure above to minimize sound transmission over them into adjacent spaces. Install sound attenuation in walls to minimize sound transmission. Install fabric panels, curtains, carpeting, or other sound-dampening materials to minimize echoes.

Chair

Provide a task chair suitable for a workstation. Seat, back, armrest, lumbar, tension, and height adjustments are preferable. Casters are also important to allow the user freedom of movement when hands are occupied with bottles of milk and pump parts.

Table/Counter

Provide a minimum 20-inch deep by 30-inch wide plastic laminate or solid work surface for the pump and bottles to rest on in front of the task chair. Provide a 30-inch wide clear knee space beneath the counter. Provide above counter outlets at the work area. If a telephone is provided, it should be within easy reach of the work area.

Sink

Provide a sink and faucet combination deep enough to wash bottles and pump parts. Goose neck or kitchen type faucets are recommended. If possible, locate the sink adjacent to the work area.

Lighting and HVAC

Task lighting should be provided over the sink and the work area. Overhead lighting is also appropriate if light levels at the work surfaces are adequate. Temperature should be maintained year-round at a comfortably warm level such as in a dressing room. Install a thermostat in the room to increase user control and thermal comfort.

Milk Storage

Install a midsize or compact refrigerator for milk storage. Under-counter models help conserve floor space but should not take up the knee space beneath the work area.

Accessories

Useful accessories in a lactation room include a trash can, a paper towel dispenser, a coat rack or coat hooks, a full-length mirror, a magazine rack, and a bulletin board. If many mothers will be sharing the room, installing a clipboard or bulletin board outside the door will help schedule room use.

RESOURCES

¹ American Institute of Architects, Lactation Room Design –
<http://www.aia.org/aiaucmp/groups/secure/documents/pdf/aia037226.pdf>

² National Institutes of Health – <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/breastfeeding.html>

³ American Academy of Pediatrics, Policy Statement: “Breastfeeding and the Use of Human Milk”, 2012 - <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/115/2/496.full#sec-1>