



Becoming a breastfeeding friendly place

A step-by-step guide

Adapted with permission from
Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit





The importance of supporting breastfeeding in the workplace

It's a human right

The Ontario Human Rights Code states that individuals have the right to breastfeed/chestfeed*, undisturbed in any public place in Ontario. It notes that breastfeeding individuals should not be asked to "cover up" or move to a more "discreet" area. By supporting breastfeeding, your organization will:

- Publicly acknowledge the right to breastfeed
- Support individuals who breastfeed or express their milk on the premise of your organization
- Align your organization with the promotion of health and wellness

*The terms breastmilk/breastfed/breastfeeding are widely used but human milk/chestfed/chestfeeding can be used interchangeably.

Benefits of human milk

Breastfeeding protects both child health and the health of the breastfeeding individual. Breastfeeding also supports growth and development by providing a valuable source of nutrients, including protein and healthy fats (omega-3 fatty acids) as well as some vitamins and minerals. Many of the protective effects of breastfeeding are dose related. This means the longer breastfeeding or providing human milk continues, the greater the protective effect is for both the child and the breastfeeding individual.

Breastfeeding supports cognitive development and decreases a child's risk of:

- Sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)
- Diarrhea
- Ear and lung infections

Individuals who breastfeed also benefit from protective factors that increase over time and are less likely to experience:

- Breast and ovarian cancer
- Type 2 diabetes
- Heart disease

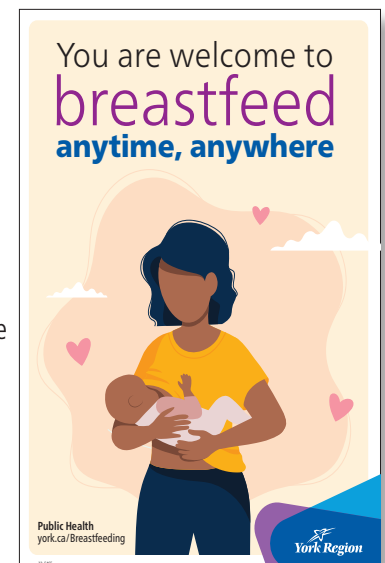
Breastfeeding also helps create healthier communities

- Breastfeeding is environmentally friendly since it does not create packaging or waste disposal
- Breastfeeding benefits businesses. Parents* take less time off work to care for sick children because children who continue to receive human milk get sick less often. With less time off needed, other employees may not need to cover for parents caring for a sick child
- Breastfeeding reduces healthcare cost and children spend less time at the doctor or in emergency rooms with infections and illnesses
- Breastfeeding is free and can reduce financial burdens

By supporting and welcoming breastfeeding families on your premise, you are joining many other businesses,

organizations and municipalities that have made a commitment to promote a healthy community.

* The terms parent/parents are meant to be inclusive of all parents, caregivers and significant others.



Sample of York Region Public Health breastfeeding decal

Take action

What can I do?

All parents have the right to breastfeed their child in a public area. The checklist below and steps on the next page show you ways to welcome breastfeeding families.

★ Breastfeeding friendly places checklist

- Staff are aware that the right to breastfeed a child in a public area is protected under the *Ontario Human Rights Code*
- Staff understand how they can support individuals to feel comfortable breastfeeding or expressing their milk
- We have established breastfeeding friendly places policies, guidelines and training
- We display the *York Region Public Health* "You are welcome to breastfeed anytime, anywhere" decal or other breastfeeding friendly resources on the premises
- Staff understand that some individuals may prefer privacy when breastfeeding or expressing their milk and will support requests for privacy whenever possible, including offering a comfortable and private place

For more information on how to support breastfeeding or to order breastfeeding-friendly decals and resources, please contact *Access York* at 1-877-464-9675 or visit york.ca/Breastfeeding



Step 1: Inform staff

Well-informed staff are critical to creating a supportive breastfeeding workplace. Clear guidelines or policies create clear expectations.

Here are some ways to ensure staff are well-informed:

- Inform staff of policies, training and guidelines that support breastfeeding
- Post a copy of the workplace **Policy** and **Staff Tips** where employees will see it (see pages 5 and 6)
- Share a copy of this guide with staff and discuss ways that staff can support breastfeeding on the premise
- Inform all new staff that your establishment welcomes breastfeeding and keep track of staff who have received information
- Ensure policies, training and guidelines are part of the orientation material. Keep a copy of the policy with your staff

Step 2: Inform breastfeeding parents

- Display “You are welcome to breastfeed anytime, anywhere” decals where everyone can see them. Don’t have one? Call Access York at 1-877-464-9675 to request one
- If an individual requests a private place to breastfeed or express their milk, have staff direct them to a private and comfortable location, including a vacant meeting room or office. Note that a washroom is never an appropriate place to suggest breastfeeding or expressing milk. Consider posting a “room in use” sign if unable to lock door to help ensure privacy

Step 3: Inform the general public

- Advertise that you are a breastfeeding-friendly place by downloading an electronic version of the breastfeeding-friendly decal and other resources are available for download on our website at york.ca/Breastfeeding
- Determine areas for parents to change their child’s diaper and if applicable, ensure to promote these spaces to the public

Remember:

By law, workplaces must support breastfeeding employees.

The Ontario Human Rights Commission states, “Women cannot be discriminated against in any way because they have chosen to breastfeed.” The employee and the employer need to collaborate on the arrangements to permit the employee to breastfeed upon their return to work. “Employees who require breaks, such as for pumping or breastfeeding, should normally be accorded those breaks, and not be asked to forgo normal meal breaks as a result, or work additional time to make up for the breaks, unless the employer can show undue hardship.”

Implementing a breastfeeding-friendly policy

Having a breastfeeding-friendly policy is an effective way to ensure staff are aware that your premise and organization supports breastfeeding and expressing human milk.

For your convenience, here is a sample policy template to use and post in a visible area. This policy can be used as a separate policy or incorporate it into other existing policies.

Breastfeeding friendly policy

Policy No. _____

Date Approved: _____ .

_____ supports breastfeeding and the right to breastfeed undisturbed in public places.

Purpose

To support and create welcoming workplace environments for all individuals to breastfeed within _____. All staff have the right and will be provided time, a private location and appropriate accommodations necessary to facilitate breastfeeding or expression of human milk.

Definitions

Accommodation - refers to the efforts by _____ to facilitate an individual's wish to breastfeed on the premises, which includes facilitating a staff's decision to breastfeed or express human milk by providing the needed time in a clean, comfortable and private setting.

Breastfeeding - includes pumping or expressing milk, as well as feeding directly from the breast or chest.

Public - any visitor to _____ .

Public place - refers to any area on the premise where staff, clients, visitors are permitted.

Application

_____ promotes and supports breastfeeding and the expression of human milk by staff and the public on our premise.

Upon request and availability of a vacant space, staff will assist individuals who wish to breastfeed by providing a private and comfortable location. Pursuant to the Ontario Human Rights Code, staff will not disturb breastfeeding individuals, ask them to "cover up," or move them to a "decreet" location.

Consider reasonable accommodations. This may include allowing a parent to bring the breastfeeding child into the workplace where children do not typically attend to be breastfed; making scheduling changes to permit time to express human milk or breastfeed or to reach home in time to breastfeed; providing a comfortable, dignified and appropriate area for staff to breastfeed or express and store human milk.

Compliance

All _____ management and employees are responsible to know and comply with this policy. All _____ staff are responsible to ensure all individuals feel welcome to breastfeed in public on all _____ premises and all _____ employees feel welcome to breastfeed or express human milk in the workplace, in accordance with the Ontario Human Rights Code. Any non-compliance with this policy may result in disciplinary action of staff, up to and including dismissal. If staff requires additional guidance on this policy, they should contact _____ .

Tips for staff to support breastfeeding

Staff can help breastfeeding individuals feel more comfortable when they:

- Are supportive of other staff who are breastfeeding or expressing their milk
- Allow a parent to breastfeed or express their milk undisturbed, where they choose
- Speak in a relaxed and comfortable manner when talking with a breastfeeding individual
- Accommodate a request for privacy, when possible. If available, staff may direct them to a designated breastfeeding location or a location that is more private

Note that washrooms are not a suitable place for anyone to eat, including a breastfeeding child.

If anyone expresses a concern about a parent breastfeeding, staff are encouraged to:

- Explain that your workplace supports breastfeeding and it is your practice/policy to support any individual to breastfeed
- Explain that the Ontario Human Rights Code protects the right to breastfeed in public areas regardless of the age of the child. It specifies that a parent should not be disturbed by being asked to stop, “cover up” or asked to move to a more “discreet” area
- Offer to make other accommodations to help the customer be more comfortable, instead of disturbing the breastfeeding individual





Frequently asked questions

What is a breastfeeding-friendly place?

A breastfeeding-friendly place is one where individuals who are breastfeeding feel welcomed, dignified and accepted. A clean, private and comfortable location at or near the workplace is needed for breastfeeding or expressing milk. Staff are aware of and support the human right to breastfeed a child in a public area.

What is a breastfeeding-friendly decal?

This decal depicts a parent breastfeeding their child, and states "You are welcome to breastfeed anytime, anywhere". These decals can be printed from york.ca/Breastfeeding or ordered as a self-adhesive decal by calling York Region Access York at 1-877-464-9675. By placing the decal in areas frequented by the public, you are announcing that your workplace and staff respect and support the rights of breastfeeding individuals.

What rights do parents have to breastfeed in public?

The Ontario Human Rights Code is a law that gives parents the right to breastfeed their child in a public area. No one should prevent parents from breastfeeding their child simply because they are in public. They should not be asked to "cover up," be disturbed or asked to move to another area that is more "discreet."

Why can't parents just breastfeed before they leave home or feed their child with a bottle?

In addition to the human right to breastfeed their child in a public area, children may need to breastfeed while outside the home. While expressing human milk and feeding by

bottle may be an option for some, breastfeeding a child directly from the breast is encouraged and all parents need their feeding decisions to be supported.

Health Canada and national associations, such as Canadian Paediatrics Society and Dietitians of Canada, all recommend that babies are exclusively breastfed for the first six months of life. Continued breastfeeding is recommended for up to two years of age and beyond. This recommendation includes feeding children by following their feeding cues, which may include during work hours.

How should you respond if someone complains?

One option is, "I hear that you're uncomfortable; however, our policy is to welcome breastfeeding on our premise as the *Ontario Human Rights Code* protects breastfeeding in public. Is there something I can do to help you feel more comfortable?"

If staff choose to express their milk at work, where can they safely store the expressed milk?

Human milk can be safely stored within a shared workplace refrigerator ensuring containers are sealed tightly and labeled with the staff's name or alternatively, the staff may choose to store their milk with ice packs in an insulated cooler bag.

Who should I contact for more information?

Call Access York at 1-877-464-9675, or visit york.ca/Breastfeeding

