

10 THINGS... YOUR DIETICIAN WANTS YOU TO KNOW ABOUT BREASTFEEDING AND WORK

According to the Association for Dietetics in South Africa (ADSA), here's what you need to know:

- 1** • Optimal infant and young child feeding is defined by the World Health Organization as "exclusive breastfeeding from birth for the first six months of life and, starting from six months of age, feeding safe and appropriate complementary foods, along with continued breastfeeding for up to two years of age or beyond".
- 2** • Breastfeeding mothers in South Africa are protected by the Basic Conditions of Employment Act and are legally entitled to two 30-minute breaks per day for breastfeeding or expressing milk if their infants are younger than six months.
- 3** • In 2011, the Tshwane Declaration of Support for Breastfeeding in South Africa was signed by the Minister of Health and many other stakeholders. This stated that "the promotion, protection and support of breastfeeding requires commitment and action from all stakeholders, including government and legislators, community leaders, traditional leaders and healers, civil society, HCWs and managers, researchers, the private sector, employers, the women's sector, the media and every citizen".
- 4** • It is possible to create a breastfeeding-friendly work environment by having a breastfeeding-friendly room, corner or space in your workplace where mothers can breastfeed their babies or express milk, and ensuring that there are refrigeration facilities for mothers to store breast milk if they are expressing.
- 5** • Give your baby only breast milk for the first six months; no other food or drink is needed at this age. If a baby is given other food and drink, they will consume less breast milk and receive less nutrition.
- 6** • Babies are protected against infection when they are breastfed. In addition to containing all of the nutrients your baby needs for the first six months, breast milk also contains antibodies that help to protect your baby against illness.
- 7** • Dietitians are trained to assist mothers with breastfeeding, as well as to assist mothers with continued breastfeeding when returning to work, and are able to help you to calculate how much milk you need to express during the day. To find a registered dietitian in your area, visit the Association for Dietetics in South Africa's website: www.adsa.org.za.
- 8** • Ensure that you feed your little one by breastfeeding before leaving for work and as soon as you get home. And for babies older than six months, make sure the caregiver doesn't give your child a big meal/snack before you get home; a smaller snack will be better, as your little one will then happily breastfeed and it may also relieve some engorgement.
- 9** • Ensure that you know how to hand-express milk and that you have a pump that suits your needs (different pumps are required depending on the number of hours you work – ie part-time vs full-time). Also, build up a milk supply before returning to work.
- 10** • Expressed breast milk can be stored. All milk should be dated before storing. Storing milk in 60ml to 120ml quantities may reduce waste. Refrigerated milk has more anti-infective properties than frozen milk. Cool fresh milk in the refrigerator before adding it to previously frozen milk. Preferably, human milk should be refrigerated or chilled right after it is expressed.

