Breastfeeding and Lactation Advocacy 101: Toolkit

Breastfeeding and Traveling

Breastfeeding and lactating people have rights while traveling. Forty-nine states, the District of Columbia, and the Virgin Islands have public accommodation for breastfeeding laws that protect a parent’s right to breastfeed in any public or private location. The only state that does not have a specific public breastfeeding law is Idaho. Under the Right to Breastfeed Act, breastfeeding women are allowed to breastfeed on any federal property, including National Parks. Therefore, individuals should be able to breastfeed in most airports, train stations, bus stations, and rest locations throughout the nation without incident.

A breastfeeding parent has different needs when traveling with their baby than when they travel without their baby. When pumping, the parent needs a private, clean space to express breast milk. A parent may breastfeed their child in any location, public or private, where they are otherwise authorized to be present. See the section Breastfeeding in Public for more details.

In California, airports with more than one million travelers per year must provide a room or other location at each airport terminal for travelers to express breast milk. The area must be located behind the airport security screening area, must be private, have a chair and an electrical outlet. The space provided may not be a public restroom.

Airport Security

Travelers can bring breast milk through security in their carry on luggage. Unlike other liquids, breast milk is allowed to be in containers larger than 3.4 ounces or 100 milliliters and does not need to fit in a quart sized bag. A person does not need to be traveling with their child to bring breast milk.

When traveling, it is best for the lactating person to inform the TSA officer at the beginning of the screening process when carrying breast milk in excess of 3.4 ounces in their carry-on bag. Any breast milk should be removed from the carry-on bag to be screened separately.

It is important for travelers to know that the TSA has alternate screening procedures for breast milk and that breast milk does not have to be X-rayed or opened in order to be screened. Travelers should notify the TSA officer if they would prefer for their breast milk not to be x-rayed.

According to the TSA website “TSA officers may need to test liquids for explosives or concealed prohibited items. Officers may ask to open the container and/or have a small quantity of the liquid transferred to a separate empty container or dispose of a small quantity, if feasible. The TSA officer should be informed if the person does not want the breast milk to be X-rayed or opened. Additional steps will be taken to clear the liquid and you or the traveling guardian will undergo additional screening procedures, to include a pat-down and screening of other carry-on property.”

If the traveler is bringing ice packs to keep breast milk cold and the ice packs are partially frozen, the ice packs are subject to the same screening process described above. Travelers can also bring breast pumps either in their carry on or in their checked luggage.

Expressing Milk While on an Airplane

Although it is best to pump before boarding to avoid pumping on the plane, sometimes it can’t be avoided. On longer or international flights, a traveler may need to pump in their seat. Ask the flight attendants if they can suggest a pumping location. The flight attendants can also help to keep people from disturbing the passenger while in pumping in their seat.
Storage and Transport of Breast Milk

Travelers can request a refrigerator when booking a hotel. Many hotels will deliver a refrigerator to the room for medical reasons, including storage of breast milk if requested.

If opting to ship breast milk home, some companies provide reimbursement for shipping expenses when traveling for business. If travelling for work, check with the human resources department for their policies.

Recommendations and Resources

Print out and carry a copy of the TSA’s official guidelines on traveling with breast milk.87 www.tsa.gov/travel/special-procedures/traveling-children

If a traveler feels that the TSA is restricting the amount of breast milk that they are able to carry onto the plane, they should ask for a supervisor or manager or contact TSA directly.

TSA Contact Center
866-289-9673.
www.tsa.gov/contact/customer-service

TSA Cares is a helpline that breastfeeding and lactating travelers can call 72 hours before traveling to ask questions about the screening process or to ask for additional assistance during the security checkpoint. The helpline also provides information about screening policies and procedures as well as what to expect at the security checkpoint. While at the airport, travelers can also ask a TSA agent for special support or assistance.

TSA Cares
855-787-2227
Federal Relay: 711
Weekdays: 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. ET
Weekends/Holidays: 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. ET