

Columbia University Lactation Policy FAQs

General

When should a manager/supervisor and employee discuss lactation accommodations?

Ideally, managers/supervisors should review the policy and accommodations before the employee goes out on parental leave. All employees must also be informed of the policy upon being hired.

Who should be contacted for questions and access to campus Lactation Rooms?

Please contact the Office of Work/Life at worklife@columbia.edu. You can also visit the website for more information: <https://worklife.columbia.edu/breastfeeding>

Can visitors to campus access Lactation Rooms?

Yes, however access to some spaces requires a Columbia University ID card. Please reach out to the [Office of Work/Life](#) to request access for visitors at least 5 days in advance so that appropriate arrangements can be made. When planning events with outside guests, please remember to provide Lactation Room information to attendees.

Can the Lactation Rooms be used to breastfeed babies?

Because breastfeeding can legally be done in public spaces and does not require access to breast pump equipment, priority must be given to employees who need the rooms to express milk via a breast pump. Employees wishing to breastfeed on campus are encouraged to find alternative spaces.

Time to Pump

What if a conflict arises during previously scheduled time to pump?

If a conflict arises, a required meeting for example, the employee should be given the flexibility to adjust other workday commitments in order to accommodate both the meeting and pumping needs.

What if issues of equal breaktime are brought up by non-pumping employees?

Managers/Supervisors should explain to any concerned employees that special accommodations for expressing breastmilk are required by law and anyone who takes time to pump has made arrangements to complete their work as needed.

How should coverage be handled for front-of-house facing employees (receptionist, etc.)?

Managers/Supervisors should have a conversation with employees about required work coverage during scheduled pumping times. This can be treated similarly to how each department handles bathroom and lunch breaks.

If an employee who is expressing milk must wait for coverage from a co-worker before pumping, every effort must be made by the covering employee to adhere to the agreed upon schedule and provide breaks on time.

Space for Pumping

Where are Columbia's Lactation Rooms?

A complete list of Lactation Rooms on all of Columbia's campuses can be found here:

<https://worklife.columbia.edu/lactation-room-access>

What if the Columbia designated Lactation Room is too far away from the employee's place of work?

If an employee must walk more than 10 minutes to get to a designated Lactation Room, the employee should talk to their manager/supervisor about possibly identifying space within their work area or making other accommodations. The space does not need to be exclusively dedicated to lactation, as long as priority access is given to employees who need to express milk.

The Office of Work/Life can work with employees and managers/supervisors to identify possible solutions when the distance to access a Lactation Room is too far.

Please note: Restrooms are never appropriate options for lactation spaces.