

HB1440 - FAV
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My name is Abigail Easley and I am a Lactation Consultant and Registered Nurse living and working in Baltimore City and surrounding areas. I am also a mother who was breastfeeding when I was called up for jury duty. I was thankfully not chosen, but the anxiety I felt possibly being away from my baby, how that would impact my supply, if I would be able to pump, how I could store the milk so it wouldn't spoil, if my baby would take a bottle while I was away, and how long would I be away, was extremely distressing to me. I scoured the internet for advice and found very little information. Not knowing what to expect was stressful.

In the United States, 50% of lactating parents stop breast/chest feeding due to perceived or actual low milk supply. Maintaining a milk supply requires frequent milk removal, especially in the first 6-8 weeks as supply is still hormonally driven. Many experience chronic low milk supply, which is very difficult to manage and can be impacted by hours or days away. Pumps can express as little as 40% of what a baby can get from feeding, and this means that being away can result in a big drop in supply, especially if its for a days long trial.

According to one study in 2020, 61% of babies who struggle with bottle refusal never took a bottle. This is not an issue that can be remedied quickly either. In my private practice, it can take some babies 2-3 weeks of consistent intervention to be able to take a bottle, and some never do. For babies who struggle with this issue, being away from their food source is not a safe option.

The AAP and WHO recommends breast/chest feeding for 2 years or more. While many parents go back to work or school within 8-12 weeks of giving birth, breast/chest feeding can extend into toddlerhood, and many of these parents who work from home or have flexible schedules, may not rely on pumping and their baby may not take a bottle. For those who are able to pump, they need to be able to pump for 15-20 minutes, in a private space, every 3 hours while they are away from their baby. There also needs to be storage for milk - it spoils after 4 hours at room temperature. If milk is not removed, there is a risk of clogged ducts, engorgement, or mastitis.

Of those who give birth, 1 in 5 will experience postpartum mood disorders. Abruptly weaning can contribute to this - hormonally and otherwise. Choosing to feed a baby at the breast/chest is not just about nutrition - its a relationship that both mom and baby need to be ready to stop on their own time.

I firmly believe lactating parents should be exempted from jury duty to preserve the feeding relationship. It is an unnecessary stressor and requires frequent interruptions to accommodate milk removal, which may not benefit the court.

Thank you for your time.

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Sources:

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