



AXA UNION NEWSLETTER

May 2008

Humiliation for nursing mums

Unite has been staggered to find that nursing mothers are having to express breast milk in toilets within AXA. Despite the company's policy on the subject stating that nursing mothers who wish to express milk should be provided with a "clean, safe and private environment", local managers are failing to provide facilities and staff are forced into expressing in toilets, which are completely inappropriate and potentially unhygienic.



This week (11th to 17th May) is **National Breastfeeding Awareness Week** and **Unite** are calling on **AXA** to demonstrate its credentials as a "preferred employer" by taking a more pro-active approach to the issue by ensuring that not only are the promised facilities available at every site in which the company trades, but also that mothers returning to the company after maternity leave are made aware of the company policy (in the Pregnant Employees guide) by their local manager, who will be supportive of their needs.

It is completely unacceptable that nursing mothers are being forced to use toilet cubicles to express milk.

Changing attitudes

Unite has joined a coalition of groups including the National Childcare Trust and the Royal College of Midwives campaigning to improve awareness of the health benefits of breastfeeding and reduce health inequalities.

More info can be found at:

www.breastfeedingmanifesto.org.uk



Supporting this manifesto will help to:

- Break down inequalities in health · Improve the health of the nation
- Save the health service money · Ensure that UK Governments fulfil their existing commitments

Benefits of breastfeeding

Both the **NHS** and the **World Health Organisation** recommend that babies are breastfed for the first six months of their lives, however in the UK it is estimated that less than 2% of babies exclusively breastfed for this length of time. This is despite the fact that breastfeeding provides babies with all the nutrients they need as well as protecting them from infection and disease, something bottle feeding does not do.

Breastfeeding helps protect babies against ear infections, gastro-intestinal infections, chest infections, urine infections, childhood diabetes, eczema, obesity and asthma.

And it is not just the baby that benefits, nursing mothers are helped with protection against ovarian cancer, breast cancer and weak bones later in life.

If you wish to continue breastfeeding whilst at work you should speak to your local union rep who can provide help and advice as well as supply you with a copy of the **NHS** guide to *Breastfeeding and Work*.

The NHS website (see below) provides help and information on breastfeeding.

Find out more on breastfeeding: www.breastfeeding.nhs.uk