



Air Travel While Breastfeeding

BLUF: *It is possible to travel without disrupting or stopping breastfeeding. Military servicemembers often are separated from their breastfeeding children due to TDY, deployments, training exercises or schools, or other job requirements. Many military families also PCS while breastfeeding. These tips will help you prepare and execute a plan of action for traveling and breastfeeding--with or without your nursing!*

Traveling With A Breastfeeding Child

Key Points:

1. Breastfeeding during air travel, especially during takeoff and landing will provide comfort as baby's ears adjust to changing cabin pressure with altitude changes. Breastfeeding also provides a consistent source of nutrition, hydration, immunities, and security during the changes to environment and circumstances that come with travel.
2. Breastfeeding on US airlines and DOD (space-A) aircraft is considered federal airspace, and the rights of a breastfeeding parent and child are protected under [federal law](#).
3. According to the [CDC](#), x-ray screening is safe and compatible for lactating parents, expressed milk, and infants and young children. [TSA](#) allows breastmilk, formula, juice, and baby foods in excess of the 3-1-1 liquid rule, but you need to declare it at security. If you prefer not to have your milk x-rayed, let the TSA agents know and they can do alternative screening processes on you and your milk. [Air Mobility Command](#) (for Space-A travel) follows TSA guidance.
4. Breastfeeding parents must comply with all safety instructions from flight attendants and aircraft staff. Contact the airline as soon as your ticket is booked to let them know you are traveling with an infant/young child. Let the flight attendant know as you board that you have an infant and ask if there are any special precautions to take. Some aircraft require special safety harnesses for lap infants, others will allow them to be secured in fabric carriers or wraps. In general, children over 2 must be ticketed and remain in their own seats during takeoff and landing. Some commercial airlines provide infant bassinets on a space-available basis for families traveling with infants under 6 months.
5. Electrical outlets/warm water may not be available to warm previously expressed milk or formula for bottle-feeds. Some babies don't care about the temperature, others are sensitive to cold. Putting a bottle in between your breasts will often quickly warm it if your baby doesn't like to drink cold liquids and a warmer is not available.

Traveling Without A Breastfeeding Child

Key Points:

1. Having a stash of several days of pumped milk will keep you prepared for short-notice travel orders.
2. [TSA](#) allows breast pumps in both checked and carryon luggage. You may need to declare your breast pump at the security checkpoint. This applies to both manual and electric pumps. Please note, the pump

does NOT entitle you to an extra piece of luggage, so make sure it fits into your carryon. 3. Electrical sources may not be readily available on aircraft or in remote duty locations. It is recommended to learn how to hand-express and bring a manual pump as a backup. Some electric pumps come with vehicle adapters or portable batteries, but Tricare specifically excludes pump batteries from coverage.

3. Pumping in airports and on airplanes may be tricky, but it is possible. If you're flying Space-A, most terminals have USO family areas, sleeping rooms, or other semi-private areas where you can pump (or breastfeed) privately, if you prefer. A growing number of military installations and airports have Mamava pods. Remember--privacy is for YOUR comfort; you are legally entitled to breastfeed or pump anywhere. Pumping on airplanes is more common as more parents breastfeed after they return to work. [This article from Pregnant Chicken](#) has some helpful tips on breastfeeding while traveling commercial.
4. Maintaining your supply while separated from your breastfeeding child will depend on how frequently you can pump. Generally, military policies support continued pumping accommodations for parents, regardless of their duty location, however, most service branch policies also require the parents' needs be balanced with the specific circumstances of each duty station. Contact your TDY supervisor, school instructor, or other POC ahead of time to let them know you'll be pumping. Make sure to have your service branch's [breastfeeding policy](#) handy.
5. What to do with expressed milk? It is possible to [carry-on](#) or [check breastmilk in luggage](#), however, if you have large quantities of milk, it may be simpler and more reliable to ship it. Many parents decide it is too cost-prohibitive to ship their milk back, and instead donate it before going home.

Resources:

- a. [TSA Guidelines on traveling with Children](#)
- b. [Air Mobility Command policy on traveling with breastmilk, formula, and baby foods](#)
- c. [CDC Guidance for traveling while breastfeeding, with or without children](#)
- d. [CDC Guidance on traveling for the breastfeeding parent](#)
- e. [TSA Guidelines on breastmilk and breast pumps in luggage](#)
- f. [Military Breastfeeding Policies](#)
- g. <https://www.verywellfamily.com/breast-milk-on-airplanes-431745>
- h. <https://pregnantchicken.com/the-mile-high-milk-club-flying-with-breastmilk/>
- i. <https://exclusivepumping.com/traveling-with-breast-milk/>

References:

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Military Lactation Counselor (MiLC) Program - 53 hours of lactation education virtual training:
<https://mom2momglobal.thinkific.com/courses/military-lactation-counselor-training>