



La Leche League Canada (LLLC) is a national not-for-profit that has provided breastfeeding education and peer support for over 60 years. This guide is designed to help aquatic facilities create welcoming environments for lactating families and ensure staff are informed, confident, and inclusive in their approach.

### **Legal Rights and Public Breastfeeding**

**Breastfeeding is a legally protected human right in Canada, including in public spaces like aquatic centres.** Mothers have the right to feed their babies whenever and wherever they need to, without being asked to move, cover up, or stop.

There are **no health or safety regulations** that prohibit breastfeeding in or near swimming pools. **Human milk is not considered a contaminant.** In fact, it contains **living substances that help protect babies from viruses and bacteria.** This includes those they may encounter in pool water.

There is no concern about how long or how often a baby nurses while in the water. Any baby, regardless of how they're fed, can spit up, vomit, or have a diaper leak in the pool. If babies are permitted in the water, breastfeeding is **not a relevant factor.**

Staff are encouraged to support a mother's feeding choices by ensuring that **any pool rules are applied equally to all caregivers,** regardless of how their baby is being fed.

### **Best Practices for Supporting Breastfeeding in Aquatic Environments**

#### **Trust the parent's experience**

In most cases, a mother who chooses to breastfeed in or around a public pool will do so with comfort and confidence. This is likely not their first time nursing in public or while

wearing swimwear. They may choose to cover or not. They may choose to feed in the water or on the pool deck. Each decision reflects what feels right for them and their baby.

Staff can generally trust that the mother knows what they're doing and does not require assistance. Unless support is specifically requested, it's best to avoid offering advice about breastfeeding techniques or positions. Unsolicited suggestions may be perceived as intrusive or patronizing.

### **Respect a variety of feeding positions**

Mothers may choose different positions for nursing depending on the pool layout and their comfort level. For example:

- Sitting cross-legged in a shallow, beach-entry area
- Standing in shallow water and holding the baby in a cradle position
- Using a water-safe baby carrier for added support while standing

Each of these is a valid and safe choice. Staff do not need to intervene unless safety concerns arise.

### **When multiple children are present**

If a parent is supervising more than one child, there may be times when one child needs attention during a feeding. If support is needed, a respectful offer such as "Can I help you?" is appropriate.

The parent may accept or decline the offer. Staff should not comment on the fact that the mother is breastfeeding and should not offer to take the baby. Let the mother guide how they would like to be supported.

## **Safety Tips for Supporting Breastfeeding at the Pool**

### **Apply safety rules consistently and fairly**

All pool safety rules for parents and caregivers with infants should be applied without bias. If a parent is allowed to hold a baby while supervising another child, this should apply equally, regardless of how the baby is being fed.

A mother who is breastfeeding may briefly support their baby with one arm while attending to another child, just like any other caregiver. Breastfeeding does not present any added safety risk. It should not result in different expectations.

### **Make reasonable accommodations without compromising safety**

If your facility restricts towels at the pool edge for safety reasons, consider practical



accommodations that still prioritize safety. For example, you might designate a nearby dry bench or shaded space where breastfeeding mothers can use a towel for warmth, privacy, or drying off.

Supporting comfort doesn't require changing policy. Applying policy with empathy and flexibility supports all parents.

### **Support the use of water-safe baby carriers**

Some parents may choose to use baby carriers designed for water to help securely hold their baby. These baby carriers are especially helpful when both mom and baby are wet and slippery. If your facility permits baby carriers in the water, ensure staff are familiar with guidelines for safe use. This may include allowing carriers only in shallow areas and discouraging jumping or submersion.

Having clear, well-communicated expectations helps parents feel supported and safe.

### **Set clear water depth guidelines (if needed)**

Most parents will naturally choose a water depth where they feel confident and in control of their baby. Your facility may establish a maximum depth for caregivers holding babies (with or without carriers). Ensure this rule is applied equally to all parents, to avoid confusion or discrimination.

## **Staff Tips: Supporting Breastfeeding When Complaints Arise**

### **Welcome breastfeeding visibly**

Post signage that affirms breastfeeding is welcome. This sets expectations and helps prevent misunderstandings. Consider using the **International Breastfeeding Symbol** alongside a friendly message like:

*“Breastfeeding is welcome here. Thank you for supporting families.”*

This simple visual cue reassures parents and helps normalize feeding in aquatic settings.



### **Be calm, respectful, and neutral**

If you see a mother breastfeeding, there's no need to make contact. Simply let them feed their baby as they need to.



If eye contact is made, a warm smile is a subtle but effective way to show support. Staff should not go out of their way to approach or avoid the parent. Breastfeeding should be treated as a normal, everyday part of the pool environment.

### **If another patron complains**

If another guest expresses concern or asks staff to intervene, respond with calm, factual reassurance. You can say:

*“Thank you. Parents are welcome to breastfeed anywhere in our facility, including the pool and deck areas.”*

If they ask for more information, you might add:

*“Breastfeeding is protected by law in Canada. Parents are not required to move or cover up. You’re welcome to find a spot on the deck where you feel comfortable.”*

Do not ask the breastfeeding parent to move, cover up, or adjust their behaviour.

### **If a confrontation occurs**

If you witness a breastfeeding parent being approached or confronted by another guest, intervene with confidence and professionalism. Parents feeding their babies may feel especially vulnerable, particularly if they’re also caring for other children.

Approach calmly and say:

*“Hi there — can I help? Breastfeeding is allowed anywhere in this facility. You’re welcome to move to another area if you’d prefer, but this parent is also welcome to stay right here and continue feeding.”*

This type of support not only helps de-escalate the situation. It also clearly communicates that the parent is respected and protected in your space.

## **Resources for Staff and Facility Managers**

These resources offer additional information on breastfeeding rights, safety, public health guidance, and practical tips for supporting families in aquatic environments.

### **Legal and Policy Guidance**

- **Lifesaving Society of Ontario – Breastfeeding at Aquatic Facilities**  
[lifesavingsociety.com – Breastfeeding Guidelines \(2024\)](https://lifesavingsociety.com/breastfeeding-guidelines-2024)  
Provincial standards outlining safe and inclusive practices for aquatic centres.



- **Your Right to Breastfeed in Public (LLLC)**  
[LLLc.ca/your-right-breastfeed-public](http://LLLc.ca/your-right-breastfeed-public)  
An overview of legal protections for breastfeeding parents in Canada.

## Education and Health Information

- **Amazing Milk (LLLC)**  
[LLLc.ca/amazing-milk](http://LLLc.ca/amazing-milk)  
Highlights the protective qualities of human milk, ideal for understanding its role in pool environments.
- **The Importance of Breastfeeding for Mothers and Parents**  
[LLLc.ca/importance-breastfeeding-mothers-and-parents](http://LLLc.ca/importance-breastfeeding-mothers-and-parents)  
Information on the physical and emotional benefits of breastfeeding.
- **Breastfeeding in Summer or Hot Weather**  
[LLLc.ca/breastfeeding-summer-or-hot-weather](http://LLLc.ca/breastfeeding-summer-or-hot-weather)  
Tips on how to support breastfeeding comfortably in warmer temperatures or outdoor settings.
- **Babywearing and Breastfeeding**  
[LLLc.ca/babywearing](http://LLLc.ca/babywearing)  
Safe and practical guidance for using carriers while feeding, useful for poolside or shallow-water use.

