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Employed Breastfeeding Mothers Face New Obstacle

Schaumburg, IL (September 2006) — New United States Transportation Security Administration (TSA) guidelines do not allow breast milk to be carried on airplane flights unless an infant accompanies the mother. Employed breastfeeding mothers, when traveling without their infants, often pump their milk and keep it stored at proper temperatures for future use. Until recently, these mothers handled this situation by including their expressed/pumped milk in carry-on containers.

Mothers who are breastfeeding realize the importance of human milk. In addition to being the best nutrition for the infant, breast milk contains anti-viral and anti-bacterial components specific to the mother and infant that cannot be purchased or duplicated. Since the TSA Guidelines were released, many mothers have contacted La Leche League International (LLLI) looking for guidance on what they can do to continue their breastfeeding relationship and preserve breast milk for their infants now that they can no longer carry the milk on board when traveling without their baby.

Currently, unless TSA guidelines change (www.tsa.gov), breastfeeding mothers have the following choices:

- Include the breast milk in checked luggage. The milk should be stored in a proper cooling container. Researchers believe that milk stored at slightly below room temperature (for example, in a cooler with ice packs) can stay fresh for up to 24 hours. See manufacturer for exact storage recommendations.
- Ship the milk frozen. Check the shipping company for regulations for shipping frozen food. United States Post Office www.usps.com; Federal Express www.fedex.com; United Parcel Service, www.usps.com

Breastfeeding mothers who are employed and need to travel for their jobs are encouraged to continue to access the TSA web site for any future changes or revisions. La Leche League International is a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping mothers who want to breastfeed their infants. For information on milk storage, breastfeeding questions, or to find a group in your area, visit www.lalecheleague.org or call 1-800-LALECHE.