

few countries explicitly set breaks every three hours.¹⁵ These arrangements are in line with ILO standards, provided that the total duration of daily breaks or reduction of working hours mandated by the maternity protection Conventions are guaranteed. For instance, the CEACR considered the legislation in countries, such as Nicaragua, which provide for a 15-minute breastfeeding break every three hours, as not being in conformity with Convention No. 3, which calls for two breaks of half an hour each over the course of a working day (CEACR, Direct Request, C3, Nicaragua, 2013). A small number of countries allow multiple breaks of over 30 minutes.¹⁶

In some countries, the number of nursing breaks depends on the working hours. This is the case in Belgium, where a woman who works a minimum of four hours a day has the right to one break of 30 minutes. If she works at least seven-and-a-half hours a day, she can take two nursing breaks of 30 minutes each. In Italy, nursing mothers who work less than six hours per day are entitled to a one-hour nursing break; nursing women who work more than six hours per day are entitled to two one-hour breaks per day. In Slovakia, women working at least half of the statutory weekly working time are also entitled to one half-hour break for nursing until the child reaches the age of six months.

In other countries, the number of breaks or their length depends on the age of the child. In Hungary, for example, nursing mothers are entitled to two hours of breaks in the first six months after birth, then one hour's break until the ninth month. Similarly, in Gabon and Mongolia, nursing mothers are entitled to two hours of breaks for the first six months (in Gabon, beginning at the time of return to work; in Mongolia, from birth), then one hour until the twelfth month.

In some cases, the nursing woman can choose how to distribute the total duration of the daily breastfeeding breaks.¹⁷ In Cambodia and Zimbabwe, for example, nursing mothers can take their allocated time as either a one-hour break or as two 30-minute breaks.¹⁸ In the Russian Federation and Tajikistan, mothers can choose to combine their breaks and take the permitted time at the beginning or end of the day. In Ireland, nursing mothers can choose to take the allocated breaks or reduce their working hours for 26 weeks after childbirth.

On production of a medical certificate or other appropriate certification as determined by national law and practice, the frequency and length of nursing breaks should be adapted to particular needs.

Recommendation No. 191, Paragraph 7

There are examples of countries where longer and/or more frequent breaks are granted in the case of particular needs. In Colombia, the employer is bound to grant more frequent rest periods than the usual two breaks of 30 minutes each if the female employee produces a medical certificate indicating the reasons why she requires more frequent breaks. In Estonia, the duration of a break granted for feeding two or more children of up to 18 months of age shall be at least one hour, instead of the normal duration of 30 minutes every three hours. In certain countries, nursing breaks may also be extended if there are no nursing facilities at the workplace. In the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, for example, the breaks are an hour long each instead of the customary 30 minutes.

Duration of the entitlement to nursing breaks

Convention No. 183 leaves it to national law and practice to determine the duration of nursing breaks to which a woman is entitled. The duration of entitlement is a fundamental aspect of enabling women workers to breastfeed in line with their preferences and the international recommendations, namely exclusive breastfeeding throughout the child's first six months of life, and breastfeeding with appropriate complementary foods for children of up to 2 years of age or beyond (WHO, 2002). Of the 121 countries that provide for paid or unpaid breaks or daily reduction of working hours, 82 countries (68 per cent) specify the duration of the entitlement (see figure 6.3).¹⁹ All of them, except Swaziland, provide breastfeeding breaks for at least six months from the birth of the child. Almost two-thirds (75 countries) of the countries with provisions, allow for a duration between six and 23 months, of which 57 countries grant at least one year. Only six countries provide for breastfeeding breaks for two years (5 per cent). None of the countries