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# Lactation suite established at Naval Health Clinic Patuxent

BY V.JOHNSON - MAY 6 2014 **POSTED IN: FEATURES** 

Story by Donna Cipolloni

Whether you're a breastfeeding mother with a doctor's appointment whose baby gets hungry, or a breastfeeding mother returning to the workplace, there is now a lactation suite available for your use at Naval Health Clinic Patuxent River.

A former exam room, the lactation suite offers nursing mothers privacy, comfort and convenience when breastfeeding their baby or expressing breast milk for later use.

"Providing that space is important because women wishing to continue breastfeeding their babies need a quiet place to do that," said Lt. Cmdr. Jill Maldarelli-Drey, associate director for Health Services. "Feeding a baby in a busy waiting room or expressing breast milk in a public bathroom stall is not exactly ideal."

The lactation room attempts to simulate the comforts of home and has been decorated to promote a serene atmosphere. The room provides a glider chair, side table and counter space to rest personal belongings and supplies, low-light option, sink for cleaning up, drop-down changing table and a top-of-the-line portable breast pump – the same model used at St. Mary's Hospital.

"The Medela Symphony electric breast pump is hospital- and commercial-grade," Maldarelli-Drey explained, "however it does require an individual breast pump accessory kit which may be purchased at local retailers. Or, of course, women can bring their own manual or electric pump to be used in the lactation suite."

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends breastfeeding for at least six months as it yields multiple health benefits for both mother and baby, said Maldarelli-Drey, who also noted that using a breast pump will help prolong the ability of mothers to continue producing breast milk after they return to work.

In December, the clinic won a Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace – Gold Level – Award, presented by the Maryland/DC Breastfeeding Coalition, in recognition of the supportive work environment they provide to breastfeeding families.

"We were one of eight different institutions receiving the award," said Maldarelli-Drey who accepted the plaque in Rockville, Md., on behalf of the clinic. "Many of them were military -

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Bethesda Naval Hospital, Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, the Defense Intelligence Agency – we were in good company. This shows that progress is being made and that there is support for breastfeeding mothers in the military and the workplace."

Madarelli-Drey hopes that by establishing the lactation suite at the clinic, tenant commands across Naval Air Station Patuxent River will take notice and consider doing the same.

"While our lactation suite is open to anyone during clinic hours, realistically, our room will mostly be used by our patients and staff," she said. "But there should be a place for every breastfeeding woman on base, whether they're military, government employee, or contractor."

As an expectant mother, Meaghan Moore is grateful knowing she'll have a quiet place to go in the future, with no worry of being disturbed.

"The clinic's lactation suite has put my mind at ease knowing I'll have my command's support in continuing to breastfeed after I return to work," she said.

The lactation suite is available during normal clinic business hours, 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. Whether you're visiting the clinic for an appointment, or a new mother returning to work, contact the front desk staff at 301-995-4309, the clinic's Medical Home Port to request use of the lactation suite.

Anyone at another command interested in establishing their own lactation suite can contact Maldarelli-Drey, a trained maternal-child nurse, at jill.maldarelli-drey@med.navy.mil; or 301-342-7427.

"I will be more than happy to help and consult with other commands," she said. "A lactation room doesn't have to be fancy; it just has to be a secure and private place for mothers."

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Instrumental in the establishment of the new lactation suite at Naval Health Clinic Patuxent, from left, Capt. Sandra Hearn,

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director for health services; Lt. Cdr. Jill Maldarelli-Drey, associate director for health services; and Cdr. Allison Faith, director healthcare business, proudly display an award presented to the clinic recognizing the supportive environment they provide breastfeeding women. (Photo by Donna Cipolloni  About vjohnson	
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