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Tax Breaks for Breast Feeding Supplies

Nursing mothers who breastfeed their infants have cause to be happy.

After a hotly disputed contention with pediatricians and breastfeeding advocates, the IRS has finally agreed to grant tax breaks for breastfeeding equipment like breast pumps, pads, bottles and the like. This tax break will be granted for expenses made in 2010.

This rule would allow nursing mothers to use pretax money from their flexible spending accounts to pay for the cost of breast pumps and other supplies. If you do not have a flexible spending account, you can deduct the cost of breastfeeding supplies on two conditions:

1. Your total unreimbursed medical expenses exceeds 7.5% of your gross adjusted income
2. You itemize your tax breaks

Breastfeeding advocates are very happy with the IRS decision as they feel this would greatly help nursing mothers who return to work to continue breastfeeding, which would benefit their infants' health. In order to work a full-time job while breastfeeding, nursing mothers require breast pumps to extract milk and bottles to hold it for the infant come feeding time. The

United States Breastfeeding Committee estimated that for most mothers, the average cost of pumps and other supplies is between \$500 and \$1,000 a year.

Likewise, the American Academy of Pediatricians lauds the IRS decision as a step towards preventing asthma and other child respiratory illnesses, obesity, bacterial and viral infections and other sicknesses among infants.

It has been discovered by a Harvard Medical research team that if 90% of mothers in America breastfeed their infants for just 6 months after birth, it would save the country \$13 billion a year in healthcare costs besides prevent the deaths of 900 infants a year due to respiratory illnesses and infections. This is primarily due to the high antibody content in breast milk.

The initial reluctance of the IRS to grant a tax break for buying breastfeeding supplies was due to the fact that breast milk was considered a health food not a medication. Thus, breastfeeding equipment is not a medical expense and therefore not qualified for tax breaks.

But in reversing the decision, IRS commissioner Doug Shulman said in a letter that breast pumps and other equipment should be considered a medical expense because “they are for the purpose of affecting a structure or function of the body of the lactating woman.” It has been found that breastfeeding does decrease the chances of developing Type 2 diabetes, ovarian cancer, breast cancer and postpartum depression for nursing mothers.