

Dutch airline KLM under fire for breastfeeding cover-up rule

17 July 2019



Franco-Dutch Air France-KLM company was criticised online after one woman was asked to cover her breast while nursing her one-year-old baby on a flight

Dutch airline KLM faced criticism Wednesday for policies that "shame women's bodies" after a breastfeeding mother said she was told to cover up in case other passengers were offended.

The woman named Shelby Angel said on Facebook that a [flight attendant](#) told her to put a blanket over her breast while nursing her one-year-old baby on flight from San Francisco to Amsterdam.

KLM confirmed on Twitter that "to ensure that all our passengers of all backgrounds feel comfortable on board, we may request a mother to cover herself while [breastfeeding](#), should other passengers be offended by this".

A KLM spokeswoman later told AFP by email when asked about the mother's complaint: "Of course, breastfeeding is permitted on board KLM flights.

"However, not all passengers feel comfortable with

breastfeeding in their vicinity and sometimes these passengers complain to the cabin staff.

"To keep the peace on board, in such cases we will try to find a solution that is acceptable to everyone and that shows respect for everyone's comfort and personal space. This may involve a request to a mother to cover her breast."

The airline, which is part of the Franco-Dutch Air France-KLM company, was criticised online, including by Dutch breastfeeding promotion group Melkpunt.

"Disappointing KLM! And a bit too easy to blame hypothetical foreign passengers... when no one has complained," the group said on its Facebook page.

In her account of the incident, Angel said she felt "extremely uncomfortable and disrespected" by what she said was KLM's attitude to her and her one-year-old daughter.

"Before we even took off, I was approached by a flight attendant carrying a blanket. She told me (and I quote) 'if you want to continue doing the breastfeeding, you need to cover yourself'," she wrote.

She said that no other passengers had complained.

When she complained to KLM "I was told that I needed to be respectful of people of other cultures and that this flight attendant's response was in line with company policy".

"So instead of standing up for and protecting breastfeeding [mothers](#) and our children, already under the duress faced by flying with our young children, KLM would rather hold up antiquated values that shame women's bodies," she said.

Rival British Airways said on Twitter when asked about its policy "If you want to nurse at your seat

that's absolutely fine".

In countries such as Britain and the US, it is illegal for business owners to discriminate against breastfeeding mothers. It was not immediately clear what the law for breastfeeding is in the Netherlands.

© 2019 AFP

APA citation: Dutch airline KLM under fire for breastfeeding cover-up rule (2019, July 17) retrieved 21 January 2022 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2019-07-dutch-airline-klm-breastfeeding-cover-up.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.