

Breastfeeding and Returning to Work

Going back to work does not mean a new mother must stop breastfeeding her baby. Breastfeeding while working can present challenges, but the rewards can outweigh the obstacles. Planning and research will help eliminate many of the challenges for both mother and baby.

Work

First, check with other mothers at work and get insight into how they handled breastfeeding when creating your plan:

- **Discuss the situation:** Talk to your supervisor or employer about your plan to continue to breastfeed before you return to your job. Let them know your situation so they do not wonder where you are if you are not at your desk or workstation.
- **Develop a plan:** Make arrangements to pump on a schedule, and share the information with the supervisor. It might be possible for your baby to visit during the lunch hour, as well. Plan ahead for business travel by storing expressed milk.
- **Scout the workplace:** Do not wait until the first day back at work to find a place to pump. Go into work the week before; check the ladies' lounge for outlets where an electric breast pump can be plugged in. Some workplaces have special lactation lounges for mothers; inquire with your supervisor or human resources department. In addition to a place to pump, locate places to properly rinse the pump parts and store the milk. Do not assume co-workers are comfortable sharing communal freezer space. See if a small freezer or a cooler with ice packs can be brought into work.

Equipment

It is important to have the right equipment on hand to implement your plan:

- **Breast pumps:** There are a number of breast pumps on the market, and each works differently for different women. Try one at home, and get a second if the first does not produce acceptable results. Having a pump that can be washed in a dishwasher helps reduce cleaning and sterilization time.
- **Time:** Depending on the type of pump, a mother can expect to spend 15 to 30 minutes away from her position to devote to expressing milk. If there is not enough time on a particular day for a full session, it is better to pump for five to 10 minutes than not at all. Skipping milk expression sessions on a regular basis will cause the milk supply to dwindle.
- **Wardrobe:** Wear outfits that are loose-fitting. Print materials help camouflage leakage better than solid colors. Keep an extra bra, blouse or dress at work in case of accidents.

If you have a new health insurance plan or insurance policy beginning on or after Sept. 23, 2010, breastfeeding comprehensive support and counseling from trained providers, as well as access to breastfeeding supplies, for pregnant and nursing women must be covered under the Affordable Care Act, without your having to pay a co-payment or co-insurance or meet your deductible. This applies only when these services are delivered by a network provider, and some other restrictions may apply.

Prepare Your Baby

In addition to health benefits, providing breast milk often helps a mother maintain an emotional connection with her baby. Here are tips for preparing the baby for separation.

- Consider waiting until the baby is 16 weeks old before returning to work full-time, or work part-time until the baby is 16 weeks old.
- Do not start the baby on bottles until the milk supply is well-established and pumping is successful.
- Introduce the baby to a bottle a few weeks before returning to work.
- Freeze milk in small amounts so it thaws more quickly. It is helpful to stockpile milk in the freezer before going back to work.
- Only thaw the amount of milk needed daily in the refrigerator every night. Never thaw frozen breast milk in a microwave oven. Microwaving can destroy valuable proteins in the milk. Never refreeze breast milk. Any thawed milk leftover after 24 hours must be discarded.
- Make sure your childcare provider has enough expressed breast milk to feed the baby during work hours. Always supply them with extra milk in case of a spill or accident.

Resources

- American Academy of Family Physicians: www.aafp.org
- La Leche League International: www.llli.org
- U.S. Department of Agriculture's WIC Works Resource System: <https://wicworks.fns.usda.gov>
- HealthCare.gov: www.healthcare.gov

Here when you need us.

Call: 844-207-5465

Online: guidanceresources.com

App: GuidanceNowSM

Web ID: LivingME

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