

Working and Breastfeeding

Congratulations! You have already given your baby the most wonderful gift by choosing to breastfeed. Now you may be wondering what to do when you return to work. Below are some answers to common concerns.

Can I maintain my milk supply at work?

In most cases, yes! This depends on maintaining the same number of breast “emptyings” after your return to work. For example, if your baby is gaining well with 6 feeds then you will need 6 breastfeeds or pumps. Ten feeds? Ten breastfeeds or pumps. You can be flexible with the timing of your pump sessions in order to meet your requirement. Here are some great books to help you: *Working and Breastfeeding Made Simple*, *Working without Weaning*, and *The Milk Memos* for example.

If you cannot maintain a full milk supply, remind yourself that you are doing a good job maintaining any milk while working. Some is better than none!

How can I pump effectively?

Ideally, you want to pump in a private place and with adequate time so that you do not feel stressed. It may be difficult for you to release your milk (let down) if you are rushing. Make a pleasant routine out of pumping by having something to eat and drink, take a picture of your baby breastfeeding and place this by the pump, and take the time to relax. Several slow, deep breaths can make a difference.

Avoid the temptation to turn the pump to its highest setting and rush through the process as this can cause nipple discomfort or damage. Many mothers use a trace of nipple ointment or olive oil on their nipples prior to pumping to avoid chafing. Make sure you are using the right size shield. Experiment with different sizes so that you know which one is both effective and comfortable for you.

Which breast pump is best?

The Affordable Care Act requires most insurance companies to provide you with a pump. They may give you choices so browse the Internet to look for reviews. Most mothers choose a pump that is fully automatic and empties both breasts at once. Speed and efficiency are important at work. Avoid borrowing a used pump; they can be unsafe to share and the motor may be wearing out.

Should I store milk to use when I return to work?

It's great to have enough milk stored for at least the first day and perhaps some extra. Some mothers overproduce and freeze the excess so they automatically have an inventory. Other mothers feel they are making just enough for their babies, but no extra. If this is you, try pumping and storing just 1 ounce a day. Do this for thirty days and you'll have covered your baby's intake for the first two days!

Can I wean the feeds when I will be away from my baby and still breastfeed when at home?
If pumping at work is not possible, but you would like to continue to breastfeed before and after work, you can wean the feeds that take place during your work hours. The longer you can wait before doing this, the more likely you are to maintain this partial supply. You may be surprised how much milk you make even without pumping during the day.

When do I prepare for returning to work?

If you are planning to wean some feeds replace one breastfeed at a time with a bottle of formula. Wait until your breasts are comfortable before replacing the next feed. Allow 2-3 days for your breasts to adjust to each dropped feed.

If you are planning to maintain some or all of your supply by pumping, then practice your technique. About a week before your first day at work, start pumping your milk as if you were at work, and then bottle feed your baby during what will be your work hours. This will allow you to become familiar with how much your baby takes, whether the bottle flows just right and how long it takes you to pump.

How much milk should I leave for my baby?

By six weeks, babies are taking 25 to 35 ounces each 24 hours, and an individual feed could be 3 to 5 ounces. You can find out exactly what your baby is taking by practicing some pumping and bottling in the week or two before you start work. You may wish to combine this with some practice days with your nanny or daycare center so you can feel confident with the routine. The more you can breastfeed, the less pumped milk you will need to provide.

When should I introduce a bottle?

It's best to introduce a bottle to your baby around 3 weeks. If you wait much longer your baby may not accept this new way of feeding. Some parents try to offer a daily bottle to keep their babies familiar with bottle-feeding.

Which bottle should I use?

Choose a nipple that delivers the milk at about the same pace your breasts do, and encourage the care provider to pace the feeds to match the time it takes your baby to breastfeed. New bottles are being introduced all the time, and there are many choices. Experiment!

What should I do if my baby refuses a bottle?

When some babies become self-aware (between four and eight weeks), they may choose not to take bottles. Please ask your baby's physician for advice if this happens.