

Returning to Work or School

Breastfeeding and returning to work or school is a lot of work. However, by the time that your baby begins solids (around 6 months of age), breast milk will no longer be 100% of your baby's nourishment. Your hard work will benefit you and your baby's health for years to come.

Planning Ahead

- **Use your maternity leave** to make sure that your baby is breastfeeding well. Establish a good milk supply by nursing frequently and if you are having any breastfeeding problems, seek help to get them resolved.
- **Allow a long enough maternity leave** to get comfortable with breastfeeding. Explore alternatives in work or school arrangements in order to accommodate breastfeeding, such as a longer leave, returning part-time, job sharing, or day care close by.
- Some employers will accommodate you by allowing you to work from home, or may even allow you to bring your baby to work with you in the early weeks or months, if you ask.
- **If you cannot leave work to breastfeed your baby, or bring baby with you, let your employer know** that you will be pumping when you return to work. Ideally, this will entail a 20-30 minute break 2 to 3 times during an 8-hour work day. The federal **Fair Labor Standard Act** contains a provision that guarantees breastfeeding mothers of infants younger than one year of age sufficient breaks and a private space to pump when back at work.
- Determine **where** you will pump at work or school; consider privacy and comfort.
- **Obtain a high quality double electric breast pump.** Check with your insurance plan to see if they provide a breast pump, and what pump they will provide. If your baby is breastfeeding well and you have a good milk supply, a good quality, personal use breast pump like the Medela Pump In Style or Freestyle should remove and maintain your milk supply well. If you are exclusively pumping (baby is not going to breast), or your supply is on the low side, the Medela Symphony hospital grade rental pump may help to maintain your milk supply better than a personal use pump. (See our information on Breast Pumps and Using a Double Electric Breast Pump.)
- **If you will only be away from your baby for a few hours at a time,** and insurance will not provide you with a pump, you may try using a good quality, single electric pump, like the Medela Swing. It may take longer to pump but will be less costly.
- **After 2 to 3 weeks of establishing a good milk supply** by breastfeeding, start using your pump to build up a small reserve of frozen milk. Pump after a morning feed (when your supply is the highest) and put this milk in the freezer.

MilkWorks



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- **Have someone other than you introduce a bottle** when baby is between 2 and 4 weeks of age. It is a good idea to use a slow flow nipple that has a relatively long nipple, and a base that is not too wide for the baby's mouth. It may help to hold the baby semi-upright and take frequent breaks while feeding baby from the bottle. This will help a baby realize they are full, so they do not over eat. (See our information on Bottle Feeding.)
- **You may find it helpful to schedule an errand or activity away from home.** Right before you leave, pump. This is called a replacement pumping, meaning that instead of storing the milk away, you are actually having someone feed baby while you are gone. This is what will happen while you are at work or school. You will pump while away from baby, and day care or family will feed your baby milk that you previously pumped.
- Remind your baby's caregiver that **your baby may need to learn how to take a bottle** and may be resistant or confused by the bottle. It is different from the breast. Ask them to be patient with baby and help them learn. (See our information on Tips for Caregivers.)
- **If your baby resists taking breast milk in a bottle,** or does not want to feed much while at day care, you may compensate by nursing frequently during the evening, night and early morning. As long as your baby receives enough nourishment during a 24-hour time period to satisfy them and support good weight gain, it does not matter what time of the day or night that your baby eats.
- **Teach your baby's caregiver how to handle and store breast milk.** (See our information on *Collection and Storage of Milk*. Some day care centers follow milk storage guidelines that are a bit different from the accepted American Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine guidelines.)
- **If your baby is cared for away from your home,** take your baby to day care and sit down and nurse before you go to work or school. Likewise, when you pick your baby up at day care, sit down and nurse before you go home. This shortens the time period that your breasts must go between feedings, and allows you to run errands or start dinner when you arrive home.
- **During your first week back,** your milk supply may decrease a bit by the end of the week. It may help to make a bit more milk than your baby needs before you return to work. This is accomplished by pumping one time a day and storing this milk for a week or two before you return to work.

Pumping

- **Wash your hands before you pump.** This is the biggest factor in your milk staying clean while stored.
- **Pump as often as your work schedule allows,** or as often as your baby normally nurses. It is most helpful if you can nurse your baby right before you go to work. You may even be able to pump one breast while your baby nurses on the other, if your baby does not normally feed from both sides at a feeding. Then you may not need to pump for another 2 to 3 hours.
- **Pump 10 to 15 minutes using a double pump.** You really only need to pump as long as it takes to get the milk you need. If you are short on time, pumping for even a few minutes is helpful. A bustier or hands free pumping bra will allow you to pump without holding the pump parts to your breasts. This also allows you to compress your breasts while pumping to help remove more milk in less time.

- **Do anything that helps you to relax** and let your milk down: slow breathing, visualizing milk flowing out of your breasts, viewing a picture of your baby, massaging your breasts, or thinking about your baby and not your work projects.
- **When finished pumping**, it is okay to rinse pump parts in cool water and air dry. In the evening, wash pump parts and bottles in hot soapy water, rinse well in cool water and air dry. Another option is to bring two sets of pump parts to work so that you do not have to clean parts while at work. There are also microwave bags that can be used to sterilize pump parts if desired.

Milk Storage

- **Use a clean container.** (It is not necessary to boil milk containers.) Commonly used containers include glass or plastic bottles, heavy weight plastic bags (designed for breast milk storage) or ice cube trays with lids. The container should be air tight. Use polypropylene (bisphenyl A-free or BPA-free) food safe plastic containers, rather than polycarbonate.
- Because most babies will take 2 ½ to 4 ½ ounces at a feeding, you may want to **store milk in 2 or 4 ounce amounts**. This may result in less wasted breast milk.
- **Freshly expressed breast milk may be stored safely at room temperature** (if necessary) for up to 8 hours. Breast milk does not spoil easily. It is optimal to put it in a small cooler with a cold pack or a refrigerator within 4 hours of pumping. Fresh breast milk may be kept in a **refrigerator** for up to 8 days or may be frozen for up to one year.
- **Fresh breast milk may be added to already chilled or frozen breast milk**; cool the newly pumped milk in the refrigerator first. Don't pour warm milk on top of frozen milk or add more milk than what is already frozen. The goal is to keep the frozen milk from thawing.
- **Thaw frozen milk** in a refrigerator overnight, in a pan of warm water, or under warm running water. **Do not microwave breast milk ever.** The heat destroys nutrients and the milk may heat unevenly and burn baby.
- **Once a bottle of milk is defrosted**, it must be used within 24 hours. Do not re-freeze. Encourage your day care provider to pour portions of a larger bottle into a smaller bottle to feed your baby. This will result in less milk being thrown away.

While Home

- **Try to breastfeed exclusively when home** with your baby. **Breastfeed as frequently** as baby desires.
- You may find that your baby takes most of his/her nourishment when home with you. **Take this as a sign that your baby prefers you.**
- **Your milk supply may diminish towards the end of your work week.** Nursing frequently and exclusively during your days off can help build your supply back up again.