

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. Explore alternatives in work or school arrangements to accommodate breastfeeding, such as a longer leave, returning part-time, job sharing or daycare costs.
- Employers may allow you to work from home or 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. 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](#) guarantees breastfeeding mothers of infants younger than one year of age sufficient breaks and a private space to pump when back to work. [The Providing Urgent Maternal Protections \(PUMP\) for Nursing Mothers Act](#) expands protects. See the ["Talking to your Boss about Pumping at Work"](#) handout.
- 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 (see our information on [Breast Pumps and Using a Double Electric Pump](#)).
- 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 highest) and put this milk in the freezer. You could also use a Haakaa pump to collect milk from one breast after your baby has taken what they need from that one and moved on to the second side.
- 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 bottle that has a relatively long nipple and a base that is not too wide for the baby's mouth (see our handout [Bottle Feeding](#)). You may find it helpful to schedule an errand or activity away from home. Right before you leave, pump. This is what will happen while you are at work or school. You will pump while away from baby, and the baby's caretaker will feed baby the milk you previously pumped.
- Remind your baby's caregiver that your baby may need to learn how to take a bottle and could 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 handout [Tips for Caregivers](#)).
- If your baby resists taking breast milk in a bottle, or does not want to feed much while at daycare, you may compensate by nursing frequently during the evening, night and early morning. As long as your baby receives enough nourishment in a 24-hour time period to support good weight gain and satisfy them, it does not matter what time of day or night your baby eats.
- Teach your baby's caregiver how to handle and store breast milk (see our information on



[Collection and Storage of Milk](#). State licensed daycare centers follow the [Nebraska Child Care Licensing Regulations](#) which are a bit different from these guidelines.)

- Try and nurse your baby as you drop them off and as you pick them up- at daycare. This shortens the time period that your breasts must go between feeding, protecting your supply.

Pumping

- Wash your hands for 20 seconds before you pump. This is the biggest factor in your milk staying clean while stored. If water is not available, you can use hand sanitizer.
- If you are sharing a pump at work, clean the power switch and dials with a disinfectant wipe.
- 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 pump one breast while your baby nurses the other, if your baby does not normally feed from both sides at that feeding. Then you may not need to pump for another 2 to 3 hours.
- Pump ~ 10-15 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 allows 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.
- When finished pumping, it is okay to rinse pump parts in running water and dry air. In the evening, wash pump parts and bottles in hot soapy water in a basin for that purpose only. Rinse well in cool water and let air dry. Or wash in a dishwasher using the sanitizing setting. Another option is to bring two sets of pump parts to work so that you don't have to clean parts there. You can also use microwave bags to sterilize pump parts if desired.