
Tips for breastfeeding at work

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The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends **breastfeeding exclusively** for about the first 6 months of your baby's life. But what about moms who work? Many women find themselves having to go back to work after just a few months with their newborns. Does this mean you have to **supplement with formula** or give up breastfeeding for good?

Absolutely not! In fact, there are **benefits for both you and your baby** if you can continue to give breast milk after going back to work. Your baby will continue to get all of the **benefits that breast milk provides** and you will still be able to provide for your child, hopefully alleviating some of the normal feelings of anxiety and even guilt you may feel when you return to work.

But you'll have to be prepared. Pumping at work is not easy. It requires commitment and planning on your part. Here are a few tips to make the process a little easier:

- Even before you give birth, talk to your boss about your plan to breastfeed to ensure a smooth transition when you return to work. Designate a clean, private area where **you can pump**, the amount of time you will need each day, and a place to store the milk. If necessary, explain to your boss that working mothers who continue to breastfeed miss less work because their babies are less likely to get sick and need Mom home.
- Have set times during the day to pump, and don't veer from them. It is very easy to get sidetracked by work demands and miss a pumping session. If you miss too many, soon you will find yourself not producing enough milk to feed your baby, forcing you to supplement with formula.
- Buy a high-grade, **reliable electric pump** or rent one from the hospital. Hand pumps work, but they are inefficient when time is an issue. They also may not adequately empty your breasts, ultimately causing your milk supply to dwindle.
- **Introduce a bottle** at least a few weeks before you plan on returning to work to make sure your baby is used to taking it. Sometimes babies will go on either a breast- or bottle-strike when you try to introduce the bottle, and this can be extremely stressful to deal with if you are already back to work.
- To make the transition easier, consider meeting with a **lactation consultant** before returning to work for specific suggestions.

Continuing to provide breast milk to your infant after you return to work is not always easy. However, if you are determined and prepared for the challenge, you can be successful and continue to offer the healthiest kind of milk to your baby.

Reviewed by Sara Connolly, March 2020

Takeaways

- Exclusively breastfeeding for the first six months after birth is recommended by the AAP.
- Involve your supervisor in your breastfeeding plans, including private places to pump and where to store your milk.
- Buy or rent an electric pump instead of opting for a hand pump, which can sometimes be unreliable.
- Consider meeting with a lactation consultant to discuss the transition back to work.