

Breastfeeding: Going Back to Work

Going back to work after your baby is born can be a very emotional and stressful time for new moms, especially if you're breastfeeding. You know you are going to miss your baby, but you may also be concerned about fitting pumping sessions into your schedule or how much you should pump. Here are some tips to help make your transition back to work easier for you and your baby.

Start pumping a few weeks before you return to work. This will give you the chance to practice pumping and give your baby time to get used to feeding from a bottle. Some moms want to stockpile breastmilk prior to going back to work but remember to feed your baby and not the freezer! You only need one or two days worth of milk on hand, since you should continue to pump what your baby needs each day that you are separated.

Before your first day back, check in with your employer to make sure that you have a space available to pump and appropriate breaks to pump during the day. You can get information about your rights at the Office on Women's Health at womenshealth.gov.

Try to pump at the same times or as often as your baby is breastfeeding. This will help remind your body to keep making the amount of milk your baby needs. This amount may differ from baby to baby and can change as babies grow. If you are having trouble pumping as much milk as your baby wants to eat while you are at work, you may want to add another pumping session to increase your milk supply. Talk with a lactation consultant about how to make pumping work for you.

Before your first day back to work, make sure you have everything you need to pump successfully including a reliable breast pump, clean bottles, extra breast pads, and an extra shirt to change into in case of leakage. If your office doesn't have a place to refrigerate your breastmilk, you can use a cooler with ice packs.

If you forget a piece of your pump or don't have access to a manual or electric breast pump, you can hand express milk from your breast. To hand express, you use your hand to massage and compress your breast to remove milk. It takes some practice, but it gets easier over time. It's also important to make sure you are drinking plenty of water when you are pumping.

Just because you are going back to work, doesn't mean breastfeeding has to stop. Talk to your partner or your baby's caregiver about why continuing to breastfeed is important to you and how they can support you. Discuss a feeding schedule and how often to feed your baby and let them know that you need extra time to pump.

Leaving your baby at home and going back to work for the first time can be stressful. But creating a pumping plan and sticking to a schedule can help ease the pressure so you can have peace of mind.