

# BREASTFEEDING AND RETURNING TO WORK

The first few weeks back at work after having a baby can be a challenge. You will feel like you are juggling a lot of balls in the air, so give yourself time to adjust. If you are breastfeeding your newborn, you have added another ball to the mix. Taking one day at a time will help ease your frustrations and make the transition smoother.

Talk to your spouse/partner and employer while you are pregnant or before you return to work and devise a plan. Consider transitioning back into work by working fewer hours each day or fewer days each week for a while.

Purchase a good breast pump, preferably a double electric pump. Begin expressing 1 oz. of breastmilk each day after three weeks if you plan to return to work at six weeks. Pump for 10 to 15 minutes on low to moderate suction/speed after baby's early morning feeding since the breasts are fullest at that time of day. If you plan to return to work after six weeks, start pumping later and enjoy time with baby.

As you teach baby to take a bottle, start with 1 oz. of breastmilk. Baby will probably be drinking 2 to 4 oz. per feeding by the time you return to work. So plan for and calculate that amount as you pump and fill bottles.

Devise a system for pumping and storing breastmilk at work. How you will keep the milk cold or frozen? You can use the cooler attached to the pump or a separate cooler/storage bag. Discuss breastmilk storage, thawing and bottle feedings with your caregiver ahead of time to ensure all the details are covered and she is informed and comfortable with your wishes.

Make sure your babysitter does her best to prevent baby from reversing his sleep cycle. You don't want baby to sleep all day while you are at work and then want to nurse all night.

Choose a day for a trial run. Pretend you are going to work and drop baby off with the babysitter. Drive around and become familiar with the anxiety and separation you are feeling, and cry if you feel like it. While baby is with the babysitter, actually go to work and find your pumping spot. Perform a trial pump to help decrease your stress level your first day back.

Always reconnect with baby after work while breastfeeding. Put concerns about your job, the laundry and bills on hold until after the feeding. The adjustments will take time, but they will come.

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