

Working and Breastfeeding

Women have always combined work and breastfeeding. You can too. Take at least 6 weeks to focus on your baby and breastfeeding, if you can. The longer you delay going back, the easier it will be for both of you!

Timing Think it through. Your baby needs you most during his first year, and it's a year that will never come again. Can you take a leave of absence? Get a loan or “early inheritance”? Can you go back part-time for a while? Will your income be worth it after daycare, transportation, clothing, convenience foods, and the extra work and worry of separation? Could you bring your baby to work full- or part-time for a few months? Can some of the work be done at home? Mothers with even the most inflexible job requirements often find surprising ways to combine working and mothering. *When you do start back, begin on Thursday, if you can, and take the next Wednesday or two off. That way, you'll work no more than two days in a row while you both adjust.*

Equipment Talk with nursing friends, La Leche League or a Board Certified Lactation Consultant. Every method has its pros and cons. Hand expression is free and needs no equipment, but takes some practice and concentration. Hand pumps are small, but probably won't yield as much as a rental pump. Small electric pumps aren't as durable or effective as rental pumps. Rental pumps are efficient, comfortable, and easy to double-pump with, but are bulky and may require an outlet. If you'll be pumping for several months, they cost about \$1 a day (compared with about \$3 plus added doctor bills for formula). Can you share the cost with a nursing co-worker? Higher-end retail double-pumps perform almost as well as rental pumps. Steer clear of any company whose reputation depends on formula as well as pumps.

Childcare Before you return to work, look for a supportive caregiver whose mothering style matches yours – someone who will hold or wear your baby as much as possible, especially during feedings, who will use your milk and check with you before offering anything else, who will be flexible, and who will avoid giving your baby a big meal just before you arrive. Some mothers prefer a caregiver close to home; others look for someone close to work. If your caregiver won't be taking your baby outside, make sure to do so a few times a week, even to run errands; direct daylight is needed for vitamin D production.

Expressing Your Milk Can you nurse the baby on your lunch hour or break? Can the baby be brought to you, by the sitter or by someone else? Would you rather have two shorter breaks or one long lunch hour? To supply all your baby's needs, you'll probably need to express your milk at least two times during a full work day. Some mothers like to pump first thing in the morning, so they already have one bottle. As your baby gets older, he may prefer just waiting for you. Most babies will want to nurse more at night to make up for missing you during the day, so use naps or an earlier bedtime to meet your own sleep needs. Your total milk supply depends more on how much you nurse at home than how much you pump at work. Does your baby seem to need more and more milk while you're gone? Look first for ways to slow his meals down; he is probably looking for more sucking time, not more calories. Stay flexible, and take your baby's changing patterns into account.

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Storing Your Milk As soon as you like, start storing small amounts in the freezer. Many mothers find morning the easiest time to express extra milk, perhaps nursing on one side while they pump on the other. Freeze it in any clean container or bag. If you use bags, keep them in a larger, sealed container to protect them from punctures. You can add to already-frozen milk if you add cold milk, but storing in small amounts (no more than 2 ounces at first) lets the sifter thaw only what's needed. Label the milk with the date, and keep it toward the back of the freezer for the coldest temperature. At work, most women express their milk on Monday for Tuesday's feedings, on Tuesday for Wednesday's, and so on, refrigerating it or keeping it in a cooler with "blue ice" containers at work. Friday's milk is saved for Monday, and over the weekend most don't pump at all. Milk can be refrigerated for several days or frozen for several months. Use the oldest milk first. A "soapy" smell can be related to freezing and rarely bothers the baby. Thaw milk under warm running water, not on a stovetop or in a microwave, then swirl to re-mix. If you feel your supply needs boosting, take a few "sick days" to stay home and do plenty of nursing. You have a much higher priority now than perfect attendance!

Supplements Some mothers combine breastfeeding and formula. Remember that using formula in the early months affects short- and long-term health. On the other hand, even a little breastmilk improves the nutrition and health of a mostly formula-fed baby. Using formula will reduce your milk supply, and can result in premature weaning. But even a few nursings a day are an irreplaceable "immunization" for your baby for as long as you can provide them - especially important in group daycare - and are an important relationship for both of you.

Bottles Almost all babies will gradually accept a bottle if it's not forced on them, and if someone other than Mom offers it. Standard, old-fashioned clear (non-latex) teats are usually a good choice. But wait until you and your baby are a happy nursing couple before experimenting. Bottles were designed to replace breastfeeding, and sometimes they do! If bottles are beginning to damage your breastfeeding relationship, contact La Leche League or a Certified Lactation Consultant for suggestions.

Working Mothers' Rights When you make arrangements with your employer, explain that you *will* be breastfeeding, rather than asking permission. Almost all countries recognize a mother's right to be with her baby in the early months. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends exclusive breastfeeding for about 6 months, with continued nursing to *at least* a year. The Innocenti Declaration, signed by the United States and other countries in 1990, states that "...all women should be enabled to practice exclusive breastfeeding and all infants should be fed exclusively on breastmilk from birth to 6 months of age. Thereafter, children should continue to be breastfed, while receiving appropriate and adequate complementary foods, for up to two years of age or beyond. This child-feeding ideal is to be achieved by creating an appropriate environment of awareness and support so that women can breastfeed in this manner... All governments... should have... enacted imaginative legislation protecting the breastfeeding rights of working women and established means for its enforcement." You have a recognized right to breastfeed your baby. If you need help protecting that right, contact your physician, La Leche League, or a Lactation Consultant.

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