



Returning to Work or School

Breastfeeding and returning to work or school may seem like a lot of work. However, by the time that your baby begins solids (around 6 months of age), Breastmilk will no longer be 100% of your baby's nourishment. In reality, your hard work will benefit your baby's health for years to come.

Planning Ahead

- **Use your maternity leave** to establish a good milk supply by nursing frequently. If you are having any breastfeeding problems, seek help to get them resolved.
- **Allow a long enough maternity leave** to get comfortable with nursing. Explore alternatives in work or school arrangements in order to accommodate nursing, such as a longer leave, returning part-time, job sharing, or day care close by.
- **Let your employer know** that you will be pumping when you return to work. Ideally, this will entail a 10-15 minute break 2 to 3 times during an 8-hour work day.
- Determine **where** you will pump at work or school; consider privacy and comfort.
- **Studies have shown** that breastmilk may be stored at room temp for 4-6 hours. Breastmilk does not spoil easily. It will keep even longer in a small cooler with a cold pack or a refrigerator.
- **Rent or purchase a good-quality electric breast pump.** A rental pump will cost \$66 per month (plus a rental kit). Purchasing a pump will cost \$200-300.
- **If you will only be away from your baby for a few hours**, you may try using a good quality manual or single electric pump. It will take longer to pump but will be less expensive for you (\$34-\$129).
- **After 2-3 weeks of establishing a milk supply** by nursing, start using your pump to build up a reserve of frozen milk. Pump halfway between two morning feedings (when your supply is the highest). Put this milk in the freezer.

- **Have someone other than you introduce a bottle** to baby between 2 and 4 weeks of age. It is a good idea to use a slow flow nipple that has a long nipple and a wide base. Babies have a tendency to take more than they actually need from a bottle. It may be helpful to take frequent breaks while feeding from the bottle to give baby time to realize they feel full.
- **You may find it helpful to schedule an errand or activity away from home.** Right before you leave, pump. Leave this milk for dad or a family member to feed to baby while you are gone. Remind them that your baby needs to learn how to take a bottle and may be resistant or confused by the bottle nipple. Ask them to be patient. This is called a replacement pumping, meaning that instead of storing the milk away, you are actually having someone feed baby while you are gone. This is what will happen while you are at work or school. You will be pumping while away from baby and day care or family will be feeding your baby milk that you previously pumped.
- **If your baby resists taking breastmilk in a bottle,** or does not want to feed much while at day care, you may compensate by nursing frequently during the evening, night and early morning. As long as your baby receives enough nourishment during a 24-hour time period to satisfy them, it does not matter what time of the day or night that your baby eats.
- Teach whoever will be caring for your baby **how to handle breastmilk** (see Medela's *Collection and Storage of Milk*).
- **If your baby is cared for away from your home,** take your baby to day care and sit down and nurse before you go to work or school. Likewise, when you pick your baby up at day care, sit down and nurse before you go home. This shortens the time period that your breasts must go between feedings. It also saves time and allows you to run errands or start dinner when you arrive home.
- **During your first week back,** your milk supply may decrease a bit. Before you return to work, it is best to be making more milk than your baby needs. This is accomplished by trying to pump and store milk at least one time a day for a couple of weeks before you return to work.

Pumping

- **Wash hands** before pumping.
- **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. That way you will not need to pump for another 2 to 3 hours.
- **Pump 10 to 15 minutes using a double pump.** Continue pumping even if milk flow decreases. If you are short on time, pumping for even a few minutes is helpful. A bustier or cami may allow you to pump hands free, or without holding the pump parts.

MilkWorks is a Comprehensive Resource to Help You Breastfeed Your Baby

5930 So. 58th (in the Trade Center), Lincoln, NE 68516 - (402) 423-6402 - milkworks.org - c2006,2008

- **Do anything that helps 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, thinking about your baby and not your work projects.
- **When finished pumping**, it is okay to just rinse pump parts in cool water and air dry. In the evening, wash pump parts and bottles in hot soapy water, rinse well in cool water and air dry. Another option is to bring 2 sets of pump parts to work so that you do not have to clean parts while at work. There are also microwave bags that can be used to clean pump parts.

Storage

- **Use a clean container.** Boiling is not necessary. Commonly used containers include glass or plastic bottles, heavy weight plastic bags (designed for breastmilk storage) or ice cube trays with lids. The container should be air tight. You may want to consider using a polypropylene (bisphenyl A free), rather than polycarbonate, plastic container for long term storage.
- **Because most babies will take 2 ½ to 4 ½ oz.** at a feeding, you may want to store milk in 2 or 4 oz. amounts. This may result in less wasted breast milk.
- **Freshly expressed breastmilk** may be kept at **room temperature** for 6 hours. Otherwise, it may be kept in a cooler with ice or an ‘ice packet’.
- Fresh breastmilk may be kept in a **refrigerator** for 6 days or may be frozen for up to one year.
- Fresh breastmilk may be **added to already chilled or frozen breastmilk**, however, cool the newly pumped milk in the refrigerator first. Don’t pour warm milk on top of frozen milk or add more milk than what is already frozen. The goal is to minimize thawing of the frozen milk.
- **Thaw frozen milk** in refrigerator overnight, in a pan of warm water, or under warm running water. **Do not use a microwave to defrost or warm milk.** The heat destroys nutrients and may burn baby.
- **Once a bottle of milk is defrosted**, it must be used within 24 hours. Do not re-freeze. Encourage your day care provider to pour portions of a larger bottle into a smaller bottle to feed your baby. This will result in less milk being thrown away.

While Home

- **Try to breastfeed exclusively** when home with baby.
- **Nurse frequently** through the evening/night/early morning as baby desires.
- You may find that your baby takes most of his/her nourishment when home with you. **Take this as a sign that your baby prefers you.**
- **Your milk supply may diminish** towards the end of your work week. Nursing frequently and exclusively during your days off will build your supply back up again for the following week.
- **Babies go through ‘growth spurts’** when they nurse more to increase supply. This is normal and often happens around six weeks of age. If you can delay returning to work until after six weeks, your milk supply may be more established and weather the return to work better. Babies often go through another growth spurt around twelve weeks of age.