

Tips for Returning to Work

Planning ahead is essential to successful breastfeeding after you return to work

Well before you return, or even before you go on leave, talk to your supervisor about your plans to express milk during the workday. Consider such questions as:

- When and how often will you need to pump?
- What changes might have to be made in your work schedule to allow you to pump?
- Where can you pump?

Lactation rooms are available in Building 490, Room 8-13, Building 741, Rm. 160 and Building 745, Rm. 160, and Building 510, Rm. 1-103. However, those who have private offices may prefer to remain in them.

How to Talk with your supervisor

When you meet with your supervisor to discuss plans to continue breastfeeding after your return to work, explain your needs and have a plan prepared. S/he needs to know that pumping won't interfere with your work. Assure your supervisor that providing breast milk for your baby will allow you to commit more fully to your job since your baby is less likely to be sick, reducing your stress and time away from work (see the benefits of breastfeeding

If s/he isn't familiar with the March 2010 FLSA amendment requiring business to provide break time and a location for employees who are nursing, refer to support. Employees and supervisors are expected to work together within the FLSA requirement and BNL's Workplace Lactation Policy regarding breaks and hours of work to accommodate those who wish to use the facility. Generally, a maximum of 15 to 25 minutes 3 times daily should be sufficient. The employee and her supervisor should agree on the timing of these breaks.

The Last Two Weeks Before Returning to Work

- Going back to work can be stressful. Think about what you can do to make the adjustment easier.
- Take the longest leave you can. This will allow your milk supply to become strong before you return to work.
- Arrange for a short first work week and/or start mid-week if possible
- If you can, work part time for the first week or two.
- Plan a "dry-run" with your childcare provider or center. Have the baby stay with her/him for a few hours each day for several days to ease the transition.
- Talk to your family about the extra help you will need with household chores. You may have to let some housework go undone, so you can get the rest you need. As your baby gets older, you will be able to get more sleep, and your schedule will become more regular.

Introducing Your Baby to a Bottle

If you use a bottle too early, your baby may not breastfeed as well. This problem is called "nipple confusion." It is best to avoid bottles and pacifiers until your baby is 4 to 6 weeks old and has learned how to breastfeed well.

Pumping Your Breasts

- Practice for one or two weeks before you return to work. You can try pumping just after your baby feeds. Or you can pump between your baby's feedings.
- You may not get much milk when you first begin. After a few days of regular pumping, your breasts will begin to make more milk.
- Practicing at home will help you learn how your pump works. During this time, you also can collect and store extra milk.
- With practice and a good pump, you can empty your breasts in as little as 10 to 15 minutes. While you are at work, try to pump as often as your child usually feeds. To keep up your milk supply, give your baby extra feedings when you are together.
- A quiet, relaxed environment encourages your milk ejection reflex (let-down).
- It is helpful to follow the same routine each time you express milk.
- Have a beverage to drink before and/or during pumping. Drink plenty of water and never ignore your thirst.
- At first it may be necessary to pump every 2-3 hours to maintain your milk supply.
- It is very helpful to think of your baby when pumping. Look at his/her picture. Some women bring a clothing item from the baby to work. The touch and smell encourages the milk ejection reflex.
- Massaging your breasts while pumping increases production.

- Have nutritious snacks at your work desk.
- A shortened pumping session is better than none at all.

If you don't pump, your breasts will adjust and stop making milk during your workday. For the first few days, they may become overly full and leak. You can use breast shells in your bra to catch leaking milk. Crossing your arms over your breasts with firm pressure can stop the leaking. If you become very uncomfortable, go into the bathroom and hand express or pump just enough milk to feel better.

Sample breastfeeding Schedule

This sample schedule is for a full-time working mother with a three month old baby:

6:30 a.m. -- Breastfeed baby at home
 8:00 a.m. -- Begin work
 9:30 a.m. -- Break to pump
 12:30 p.m.-- 10-20 minutes to pump during lunch
 3:30 p.m. -- Break to pump
 6:00 p.m. -- Breastfeed baby at caregiver's or at home

Storing and saving breast milk

It is best to organize supplies the night before.

If a refrigerator is not available, an insulated bag will keep your milk cold while at work and during transport to home or the childcare center. Many pumps designed for the workplace come with an insulated pouch. Have plenty of bottles with the rings and disks at work or with your pump. Have soap and supplies handy to keep the pump and parts clean.

You can store your milk in daily amounts. It can be stored in a plastic or glass bottle with a sealable top. Keep in mind that your baby will want more milk during growth spurts. The best way to increase your milk supply for a growth spurt is to breastfeed or pump more often.

Pumped milk should be cooled in a refrigerator or other cooler as soon as possible. The milk also can be frozen.

It is normal for frozen breast milk to separate (the fatty part of the milk goes to the top). Shake the bottle, and the fat will go back into the milk. Thaw frozen milk slowly by swirling the container in warm water or by putting it in the refrigerator the day before it is to be used. Do not thaw frozen breast milk in a microwave oven.

Here are some general guidelines for how long you can store your breast milk:

- At room temperature (less than 77°F) for 4 to 8 hours
- At the back of a refrigerator for 3 days
- At the back of a freezer for 3 months

Don't let anyone tell you that breastfeeding and working outside the home are mutually exclusive. With careful planning and forethought, you can successfully combine breastfeeding with work.

Remember, the period of time that you will be a working and nursing mother is relatively short. Take it one day at a time

Some Practical Tips

Buy a good pump

You need an effective pump. For women separated from their babies for a full work-day, this often means a hospital-grade pump that will reproduce the baby's sucking and stimulate continued milk supply over time. A good pump will also reduce pumping time to between 10-15 minutes per session.

Adopted from Virginia Tech. Nursing Moms Program

Dress appropriately

Wear clothing that will hide any leakage and allow for easy pumping at work -- avoid dresses without front buttons and clingy or transparent blouses. Use a hair clip to hold your blouse out of the way. Leave a sweater at work to serve as a jacket when needed.

Pencil it in

Schedule pumping sessions in your calendar as you would a meeting. There are scheduling books in the lactation rooms to accommodate multiple users.

Fuel your body

Drink water often while at work. Remember to eat well.

Take it easy

The first two weeks after returning to work are often the most tiring. Cut back on other activities during that time. Get as much help with household chores as possible.

Talk to friends and experts

Find other moms who have successfully breastfed while working and enlist their support. Keep the telephone number of a lactation consultant handy in case concerns arise.

Nurse whenever you can

If you decide to supplement with formula during the day, nurse more frequently when you are with your baby to maintain your milk supply.

Return to Work Checklist

- Breast pump, plus adapter or extra batteries if appropriate.
- A small cooler (plus ice), or an insulated bag, if a refrigerator is not available for milk storage. If you forget the cooler, keep in mind that breast milk can be stored at room temperature for 4 to 8 hours.
- Enough milk storage containers for the number of pumping sessions you will need during your work day.
- An extra shirt or sweater or vest to wear in case your milk leaks. It is a good idea to wear patterned clothing. Milk leakage is much harder to see on patterned material.
- "Easy access" clothing. Your clothing should open in the front.
- A shawl or small blanket for personal privacy if you need to pump in a common area, or your private area is cool or drafty.
- A water bottle and nutritious snacks. Calorie needs are greater in women who are breastfeeding.
- A pillow for supporting your arm while you pump your breasts. This may make pumping more comfortable.

Optional

- A portable radio or a tape or CD player (plus your favorite music), an entertaining book, or a magazine. If you are relaxed, your milk will release more easily (the "let-down reflex"), and you will be able to pump your breasts better.
- A picture of your baby or an item of your baby's clothing. Thinking about your baby can stimulate the let-down reflex.