

Breast-feeding: Returning to Work

Mothers may think they cannot breast-feed because they are returning to work full or part-time. This is not true. There are several ways a working mother can maintain a milk supply and continue to breast-feed. As a matter of fact, mothers who continue to breast-feed probably miss less work because they have healthier babies.

If possible, plan to stay at home with your new baby for at least 4 to 6 weeks. The extra time spent with your baby could be helpful in many ways. You can establish a good milk supply, develop a good relationship with your baby and allow your body to rest and recover from pregnancy and childbirth.

Maintaining your milk supply:

There are several ways you can maintain your milk supply after returning to work. The method you choose should be decided by what works best for you based on:

- The demands of your job.
- The needs of your baby.
- The availability of a private area at work for breast pumping or massage and expression.

If there is no area at work set aside for breast feeding mothers, you might discuss this with management.

Breast-feeding choices:

The following 4 approaches for working mothers are examples of what you might choose. You might want to discuss other approaches with your doctor, lactation consultant and employer.

1. You may choose to pump or massage and express while at work.
 - Nurse your baby before you leave for work.
 - Pump or massage at least once, if not twice, during the 8-hour work day.
 - Nurse your baby as soon as you return home from work. Tell your babysitter not to feed your baby just before you come home. That way your baby will be hungry and will nurse. Or, pump just before leaving work.
 - Nurse throughout the evening and night.
 - On your days off from work, nurse at the times you would usually pump.

2. If you work close to home, you may choose to:
 - Have your caregiver/babysitter bring your baby to work for you to nurse during your breaks and lunch.
 - Go home to nurse during your breaks and lunch.
3. Talk with your employer about a flexible schedule that might include:
 - Working part-time (4 hours per day).
 - Job-sharing with another working mother.
4. You may choose not to do breast stimulation by pumping or massaging while at work.
 - Over time, eliminate the breast-feedings during the day.
 - At first, you may feel some engorgement or increased fullness due to lack of breast stimulation. This should adjust in a few days depending on your milk supply.
 - Nurse your baby before you leave for work.
 - Keep a supply of nursing pads at work so you can change them if they

become wet. You may wish to have an extra change of clothes handy.

- You can stop a let-down by applying pressure to your nipples. Do this by crossing your arms over your chest or pressing against your nipples with the heels of your hands.
- Nurse your baby as soon as you return home. Tell your babysitter not to feed your baby just before you come home. That way your baby will be hungry and will nurse.
- Nurse your baby throughout the evening and during the night.

Keep in mind that being a mother and working are TWO jobs. Ask your family to help with housework or, if possible, hire someone to help you.

For more information, ask your nurse for Patient Information sheet PI-123, "Breast-pumping for Your Healthy Baby" and PI-175, "Weaning Your Breast-fed Baby."



If you have any questions,
call your doctor
or your baby's doctor.