

Breastfeeding and Working

Going back to work does not have to be the end of breastfeeding. In fact, breastfeeding keeps you connected to your baby, even when you are away. Breastfeeding babies benefit from drinking pumped milk while you are at work. Your job benefits, too. Working parents who breastfeed need less time off for sick babies. With some advanced planning, breastfeeding and working can benefit everyone.

Prepare during Pregnancy:

- Talk to your employer about your plan to breastfeed and pump when you return to work.*
- Request a clean, private space to pump and store your milk.*
- Plan to take as much time off as possible. This will help you and baby to start breastfeeding well.
- You will need a good electric breast pump when you return to work.
- [Health plans may provide you with a breast pump. Ask your doctor for a prescription.](#)
- [Take a breastfeeding class before your baby is born so you can learn how to get off to a great start.](#)
- Choose a child-care provider that supports breastfeeding.
- Tell the child-care provider how to store and handle your breast milk.

After baby is born:

- Breastfeed exclusively; if your baby's doctor tells you to use formula, ask to work with a lactation consultant to improve your milk supply.
- Around week 3 or 4 after baby is born, begin to practice pumping;
 - Pump one time per day, after a morning feeding, when baby is resting
 - Pump for about 10-20 minutes
 - Ask for help from a lactation consultant in using your pump correctly
- A good volume to collect after breastfeeding is 1-3 ounces.
- Collect and store your breast milk safely; see CDC guidelines for safe storage and use of breast milk.*
- Clean your breast pump using CDC guidelines.*
- Give a bottle to your baby around 3-4 weeks of age.
- Ask for help in learning how to pace bottle feed from your lactation consultant.

Before returning to work:

- Start storing expressed breast milk.
- Store your milk in the refrigerator for up to 4 days.
- To store milk longer, label the bag with the date and store in the freezer for 6 to 12 months.
- Thaw frozen breast milk in the refrigerator or under warm water.
- Do not microwave or boil frozen milk to thaw.
- Thawed breast milk is good in the refrigerator for 24 hours and 2 hours at room temperature.
- Store enough milk for feedings when separated from your baby.
- Full term, healthy babies need about 1 to 1.5oz per hour.
- For a 10 hour separation at 3 months, 12-16oz is enough for daycare.
- Store in 3-4oz bottles or bags.
- A good volume for a freezer stash of milk for a return to work is 15-30oz.
- About 1-2 weeks before you return to work, do a trial run of leaving baby with a caregiver:
 - Practice leaving the house dressed for work with all your pump supplies
 - Practice preparing milk for the baby
 - Let baby's caregiver practice caring for the baby
 - Trouble shoot ways to make your return to work go smoothly
- Arrange for a short first work week
 - Example: if you work Monday through Friday, begin on a Wednesday or Thursday
- Choose clothes to wear to work that you are able to pump in.
- At work, pump every 2-3 hours while away from baby to keep up your milk supply.
- Keep a picture or video of your baby with you while you pump to help milk flow.
- Breastfeed as soon as you return to your baby or arrange for your caregiver to bring baby to work for a feeding.
- Keep breastfeeding in the mornings, evenings, before bed, and on your days off.
- Remember to drink plenty of fluids, eat well-balanced meals and snacks, and get plenty of rest.



BREASTFEEDING: A GUIDE FOR THE PARENT RETURNING TO WORK

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life. At six months, continue breastfeeding while introducing table foods. Continue breastfeeding until two years of life or as long as you and baby like.

For more help, support groups and resources, visit [The Birth Place at UCLA](#) or call 424-259-8250.

Resources and laws

[Back to Work and Breastfeeding – Office on Women’s Health](#)

[Proper Storage and Preparation of Breast Milk – CDC](#)

[How to Keep Your Breast Pump Clean - CDC](#)

[Frequently Asked Questions – Breastfeeding – CDC](#)

[California Breastfeeding Laws](#)

[Lactation Accommodations Support for Child Care Providers](#)