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), Breast milk 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 breast milk may be stored at room temp for 4-6 hours.
Breast milk 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 breast milk 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 breast milk**
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.

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 breast milk 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 to 4 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 breast milk may be kept at **room temperature** for 6 hours. Otherwise, it may be kept in a cooler with ice or an ‘ice packet’.

Fresh breast milk may be kept in a **refrigerator** for 6 days or may be frozen for up to one year.

Fresh breast milk may be **added to already chilled or frozen breast milk**, 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.

Adapted from Milkworks