

Breastfeeding Mothers: Heading Back to Work

Before heading back to work, mothers can plan ahead to make it easier to provide milk for her baby:

Time frame	Recommendation
Early weeks after birth	Breastfeeding exclusively in the early weeks establishes a good, healthy milk supply and gives mothers more choices later. Obtain a double-electric pump from your insurance company.
3-4 weeks after birth	Delay bottle usage until the baby is breastfeeding well, at least 3-4 weeks. The majority of babies accept a bottle easily whether it's introduced at one or six months.
2-3 months after birth	Wait as long as possible to begin regular separations. The first few months are critical for establishing a healthy milk supply and a strong mother-baby bond.
3-4 weeks before returning to work	Start building a reserve of frozen milk. Many mothers find it easier to express in the morning – about an hour after the baby is fed. Alternatively, mothers can express from one breast and feed their baby from the other.
10 days before work	To help adjust to your new routine, start pumping and feeding baby from bottles of pumped milk according to the times you will be away.
First day of work	Begin work on a Thursday or Friday, allowing the weekend to recover and plan a strategy for the next week. Plan to pump three times/day in the first weeks you are back to work.

Tips for Pumping at Work

- 👉 Talk to your employer about arranging time for breastfeeding or expressing milk
- 👉 Locate the lactation room and a place where you can properly store your milk supply
- 👉 Determine the time you will need to express milk (at least 25 min: 15 min pumping + 10 min clean up)
- 👉 If possible, keep an extra breast pump and parts in your office

Breastmilk Storage Guidelines

Room temperature (66°-72°)	Up to 8 hours
Refrigerator	Up to 8 days
Freezer	Up to 6 months in 2-4 oz. quantities

Thawing Frozen Milk

- 👉 To thaw frozen breastmilk, run it under cool water and gradually add warm water until milk reaches room temperature. Gently shake milk before testing the temperature
- 👉 Thawed milk can be stored safely in a refrigerator up to 24 hours
- 👉 Some mothers experience thawed milk to have a soapy smell, which is not harmful to the baby. This smell is due to fat changes during the thawing process
- 👉 Fresh milk can be added to frozen milk, provided it is first cooled for 30 minutes and there is less fresh than frozen milk
- 👉 Breastmilk should NEVER be heated in a microwave, which destroys valuable nutrients

Reference: The Breastfeeding Answer Book. La Leche League International (2012).

Breastfeeding Tips for Success

Common Concern	Tips for Success
<i>“I’m worried my baby won’t know how to breastfeed.”</i>	In the womb, your baby has practiced sucking its fingers and toes and swallowing amniotic fluid. When born, they know just what to do when placed skin-to-skin.
<i>“When breastfeeding, my breasts secrete a thick yellowish liquid. Is there something wrong?”</i>	What you are seeing is colostrum , your baby’s first milk. It coats your baby’s gut, preparing it for digestion and protecting it from viruses and bacteria. Colostrum is high in antibodies, proteins, and nutrients.
<i>“My breasts hurt and feel very full.”</i>	Painful swollen breasts typically indicate engorgement . It is common in the first few days and means your milk production is off to a good start. Swelling usually lasts 36-48 hours, and is best relieved by frequent feeding. Contact your lactation consultant if you’re having difficulty latching your baby during engorgement.
<i>“I’m having trouble getting my baby to latch properly.”</i>	You may benefit from basic positioning tips from a lactation consultant. Make an appointment or sign up for a support group, like MILK at UCSF.
<i>“I’m concerned my baby isn’t getting enough milk.”</i>	Signs that your baby is getting enough milk: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 👂 You will hear swallowing 👂 Your breasts will feel softer 👂 6-8 wet diapers + several mustardy yellow and seedy looking stools/24 hrs.
<i>“I have an area on my breast that is red and tender. I also feel like I’m coming down with something.”</i>	You may have mastitis , a treatable infection of the breast tissue. Call your nurse or physician to be seen as soon as possible.
<i>“When I’m breastfeeding, I feel pain in my nipples.”</i>	Position and latch are the most important aspects to comfortable feeding. See your lactation consultant for help and coaching.
<i>“I’m embarrassed to breastfeed in public.”</i>	Attend a lactation support group, like MILK at UCSF, to get tips from lactation consultants and other mothers
<i>“How can I continue to breastfeed my baby after returning to work?”</i>	Returning to work while breastfeeding is entirely possible. Ask your employer for the location of your office’s lactation room and where you can store your milk. Meet with a lactation consultant or attend a support group, like MILK at UCSF, to get ideas and for help with returning to work.

Reference: Postpartum: Now That You’ve Given Birth (UCSF Medical Center Women’s Health) 2015.