

The Working Mother's Handbook



Hints for Successfully Combining Work and
Breastfeeding

Dear Mom,

As a working mother, you have a lot to think about before I am born. Among other things, you will be planning who will take care of me and how you will feed me while you are away. You might be wondering if you will be able to keep breastfeeding me after you go back to work. The answer is YES!

Years ago some people considered formula feeding to be an automatic choice for working mothers. Now we understand that breast milk is the ideal food for all babies, including me. There is no infant formula that has the same benefits. Your breast milk is the perfect food to help me grow and protect me from diseases. By giving me breast milk, I can feel close to you while you are at work.

This booklet can help you prepare to continue breastfeeding me after you go back to work. Planning ahead is the key. There are many things you can do before I am born to help us be successful.

Love, Your Baby



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It's Worth It!

The best reason to give your baby breast milk is because you want to do it. Mothers worry that breastfeeding will tie them down. The truth is that returning to work shortly after a baby is born is challenging for anyone, no matter how the baby is fed. Here are some things we know about combining work and breastfeeding:

- Breastfed babies are healthier than formula fed babies. Because of this, breastfeeding can decrease the number of sick days you take off work.



- Breastfeeding gives you a good feeling. You are providing something for your baby that only you can give.
- Pumping breast milk for your baby can be simple and painless.
- Many childcare providers are happy to feed your baby breast milk. Don't hesitate to ask.
- Fathers, co-workers, and bosses will be more supportive of breastfeeding if they know how important it is to you.
- Many mothers have successfully combined work and breastfeeding. You can do it too!

Planning Ahead

The decision to breastfeed is one of the best choices you can make for your health and the health of your new baby. The more you understand breastfeeding, the more smoothly breastfeeding and returning to work will go. Use the time you have now to plan ahead.

Talking to Your Employer

Before your baby is born, talk to your employer about your plan to breastfeed.

- Discuss options for your maternity leave. It is easier to combine breastfeeding and work if you have enough time (4 to 6 weeks) to establish a good milk supply first.



- Ask about returning to work. Is it possible for you to return to work part-time or have a more flexible schedule at the beginning? Can you adjust your lunch and break time to accommodate pumping? Can you bring your baby with you to work or work at home?

- Ask about a place to express (or pump) breast milk. Is there a private, clean place with a chair and an electrical outlet (if you plan to use an electric pump)?
- Ask if there is a refrigerator that you can use to store breast milk. If not, you can store milk in a portable cooler.

Talking to Co-workers

Have other women at your workplace pumped breast milk for their babies? Talk to them. Many will be happy to share their experience and practical tips with you. You might also talk to other pregnant women at work. Consider making a plan to help each other make time for pumping milk during the workday.



Finding a Caregiver



When thinking about options for childcare, it will be important to find a caregiver who is supportive of breastfeeding. While you are pregnant, take some time to explore your options. Keep in mind that you will need to choose a main caregiver as well as one or two backups.

You might bring up the subject of breastfeeding by saying, “I’d like to leave breast milk for my baby. How would you feel about that?” Don’t forget to ask about other things that are important to you. If you have a choice, it helps to find a caregiver whose ideas about childrearing are similar to yours.

Choosing a Breast Pump

Breast milk can be expressed by hand, with a hand pump, or with an electric pump. If you will be working more than part-time, a high quality electric breast pump will be best to maintain your milk supply while you are away from your baby. With a double pump and a little practice, you’ll be able to complete a pumping session in about 15 to 20 minutes.



You can buy breast pumps at lactation shops or by mail order from the Internet. Many electric pumps are intended for only one user. Avoid used electric pumps unless they are designed for multiple users (check the owner's manual for this information). You can also rent pumps from lactation shops, hospitals, and medical supply stores. A good quality breast pump costs about \$170 to \$400. Breast pumps cost about \$35 to \$65 a month to rent. Call around to find the best prices in your area.

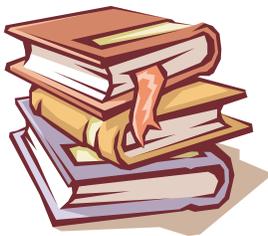


To save money, see if your company has a breast pump for employees to use at your worksite. Large companies are often willing to provide a breast pump if breastfeeding women are employed there. If you share a multi-user pump, you only have to purchase the attachment kit for your personal use (about \$25 to \$50).



Breast pumping is cost effective. The average infant will use about \$2000 worth of formula in the first year of life. Remember, giving your baby breast milk also means fewer sick days and fewer trips to the doctor.

Learning about Breastfeeding



Before your baby is born, take some time to learn about breastfeeding. If this will be your first time breastfeeding, you might read a book about breastfeeding or attend a class.

Here are some good books about breastfeeding. (If money is a concern, consider borrowing a book from your local library.)

- The Nursing Mother's Companion, \$13.95
By Kathleen Huggins
- The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding, \$15.95
By Gwen Gotsch and Judy Torgus
Endorsed by La Leche League International
- Nursing Mother, Working Mother, \$11.95
by Gale Pryor

Many hospitals sponsor breastfeeding classes for expectant mothers. La Leche League is a national support organization for breastfeeding mothers. Call 1-800-LA-LECHE to find a group in your area. Participation in La Leche League is free, and you can benefit from the experience of other mothers.

After Your Baby is Born

Getting Off to a Good Start

Enjoy the first few weeks at home with your baby! During this valuable time, focus on learning how to breastfeed and getting to know your baby.

Breastfeed as soon as possible after your baby is born. By nursing your baby 8 to 12 times a day, you will establish a good milk supply. Breast milk works on the principle of supply and demand. The more your baby demands, or sucks at the breast, the more milk your breasts will make.

It is best to avoid giving your baby a bottle until he or she is at least 3 or 4 weeks old. Giving bottles in the first few weeks can decrease your milk supply and may cause difficulty with breastfeeding.

Pumping and Introducing a Bottle



Once your milk supply is established and your baby is breastfeeding well, you can introduce a new way of feeding. Some babies enjoy breastfeeding so much that they will not accept a bottle from their mother. If this happens, try having someone else give your baby a bottle.

About 1 or 2 weeks before you return to work, start pumping and saving breast milk. This gives you practice using the breast pump and builds up a supply of stored breast milk for your baby. Pump about an hour after a feeding, once or twice a day.

It may take time for your body to learn how to “let-down” the milk when you pump. Don’t be concerned if you don’t get a lot of milk at first. Your breast milk

supply will increase the more you pump. When you are learning to express your milk, take enough time so you don't have to rush. Putting a warm washcloth on your breasts and gently massaging your breasts before you pump will help the milk flow more easily. Also, many women find that thinking about their baby or looking at a picture of their baby helps with "let-down."

Before pumping, wash your hands. Clean all the parts of the pump that come in contact with the breast milk by washing with dish soap and rinsing well after each use. Once a day, boil the pump parts or wash them in the dishwasher. You don't need to clean the air tubing and filter unless it accidentally comes in contact with breast milk.

Storage of Breast Milk

This information applies to healthy full-term babies. For babies born prematurely, ask your baby's doctor for specific instructions.

Appearance of Human Milk



Normal human milk looks different from the cow's milk you buy at the grocery store. When breast milk is left to stand, it separates as the fat rises to the top of the container. The milk has not spoiled! By gently shaking the container, breast milk will return to its previous consistency.

The color and consistency of human milk vary from day to day and from person to person. The milk at the end of a pumping session will often appear thicker because it is richer in fat.

Many factors affect the color of breast milk:

- Colostrum (or the first milk) is usually yellow or yellow-orange.
- During the first two weeks after childbirth, the colostrum slowly changes to "mature milk," which is usually bluish white in color.
- Medications, certain foods, or food dyes may change the color of breast milk.
- Occasionally, bleeding from cracked nipples may turn the milk pink. A small amount of blood in the breast milk is not dangerous. If the bleeding continues

for more than two weeks after delivery, contact a health care professional for advice.

The Smell of Breast Milk

Freshly expressed breast milk usually has a mild, sweet odor. Milk that smells sour should be thrown away.



Storage Containers

Clean glass or hard plastic containers with tight sealing lids are best for storing breast milk. There is no need to buy expensive containers; you can use Tupperware, baby food jars, or baby bottles. Containers should be cleaned before each use. Clean them in the dishwasher or wash them by hand with dish detergent, rinse well, and air dry.

Some mothers use disposable plastic bags to store breast milk. If you use them, choose bags that are specially made for breast milk storage. They can be purchased at lactation shops and baby supply stores. “Ziploc” bags and plastic bottle liners are not recommended because nutrients may stick to them, decreasing the nutritional value of the breast milk. Also, less durable plastic bags are likely to leak or split open, which may cause contamination.

Cool breast milk in the refrigerator before adding it to a container of breast milk that has already been frozen. Store the milk in small amounts, 2 to 4 ounces, to prevent waste. When freezing, leave some extra room in the top of the container. Milk expands when it freezes.

How Long Can Breast Milk Be Stored?

Opinions vary about the length of time breast milk can be stored. La Leche League International makes these recommendations:

Freshly expressed breast milk may be stored:



- In the refrigerator (32-39° F) for up to **eight days**
- In the freezer section of your combination refrigerator/freezer for **3 or 4 months**
- In a deep freeze for **6 months to one year**

If you work Monday to Friday, pump milk each day for your baby to drink the next day. On Friday pump milk for your baby to drink on Monday.



If the expressed breast milk will be used within a few days, it is best to refrigerate it. The process of freezing and thawing breast milk may destroy some of the antibodies that help babies fight infections. But remember that thawed breast milk is healthier than formula.

Store breast milk in the coldest part of the refrigerator or freezer, as far away from the door as possible. Have your babysitter keep some frozen breast milk on hand for days when your baby wants to drink more milk than you pumped.

Thawing Breast Milk

- Thaw breast milk in its container by immersing it in warm water or refrigerating it overnight. Do not use hot water because it may damage the breast milk.
- Use the oldest milk first.
- Shake gently to mix the fat layer before feeding.
- Never use a microwave to warm or thaw breast milk. It causes a loss of nutrients and may hurt the baby if overheated.
- After thawing, refrigerate the milk and use within **24 hours**.
- Only leave thawed breast milk at room temperature for the time it takes you to feed the baby.
- Never refreeze thawed breast milk.

Warming Breast Milk

- Heat breast milk under warm running water.

- Keep the temperature of the milk below boiling.
- Shake the milk before testing the temperature.
- Throw away any left over milk after a feeding is complete.

Returning to Work

Trial Runs

If possible, have your chosen caregiver take care of your baby for a couple of short periods of time before you return to work. This will help you, the baby and the caregiver become more comfortable with each other. You may also want to do a trial run for a whole day to see how things go. If the babysitter knows your baby's normal feeding times, she can offer feedings before your baby is frantic with hunger.

The Big Day

Here are some things you can do to make your return to work go as smoothly as possible:



- If possible, see if you can transition back to work by working shorter hours at first. Try to return near the end of your workweek so the first week back is shorter.
- The night before, pack your baby's diaper bag and get things organized so you won't be too rushed in the morning.
- Go to bed early, and wake up about 30 minutes early to breastfeed your baby before you leave for work.
- It may be possible for someone to bring your baby to work so that you can breastfeed during your lunch break.

- Pump breast milk about every 3 hours while you are away from your baby. Just as your baby does not feed at exact times, you can be flexible with the times you pump. As your baby starts to take solid food, you may not need to pump as often.
- If your breasts leak milk, stop the flow by casually crossing your arms and putting pressure on your chest. Choose clothes that don't show wet spots. Patterned blouses usually work the best. Change breast pads often. If you find you are leaking a lot, pump more often.
- Button down blouses or shirts that pull up from the waist make it easy to pump at work.
- Breastfeed your baby as soon as possible after work. If you know when you will be back, ask the babysitter not to feed your baby right before you pick him or her up. That way your baby will be hungry when you arrive.
- Feeding your baby at the breast will maintain your milk supply better than any pump. Breastfeed your baby often in the evening, at night, and on your days off.

Believe in Yourself



The birth of a new baby brings many changes to a family. Be patient with yourself as you adjust to the responsibilities of working and caring for a baby. Don't hesitate to rely on your partner, family members, or close friends for support. Lactation specialists at hospitals or lactation stores can answer your questions and provide help. Most of all, have confidence in yourself. By making the choice to breastfeed, you are giving your baby the very best start in life.

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