



ILCA's INSIDE TRACK

a resource for breastfeeding mothers

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Breastfeeding and Returning to Work . . . Working Out the Details

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Congratulations for breastfeeding when you go back to work! Women have worked and breastfed for thousands of years. Going back to work does not mean breastfeeding has to end. There are many ways you can make it work for you.

Things to Remember

- Your milk is the only food and drink your baby needs for the first 6 months of life.
- It's important to breastfeed up to—and past—baby's first birthday.
- Breastfed babies are healthy and rarely sick. This means you'll miss less work days.
- Plan ahead so you can be successful when returning to work.

Talk to Your Employer

- Find out how long you can stay home after your baby is born. Wait as long as you can before returning to work.
- Ask if you can work part-time for the first few weeks.
- Look for a childcare center near work so you can breastfeed during one of your breaks.
- Talk with your employer about a clean, comfortable and private place to express your milk.
- Ask for 2 or 3 flexible breaks during your work day. Expressing milk every 3 hours while at work will help maintain your milk supply.
- If you are unable to pump during your work day, you can still breastfeed when you are home with your baby.

A lactation consultant can help you plan for returning to work. To locate a lactation consultant near you, go to www.ilca.org. Call:

- **If your baby is refusing the bottle or cup.**
- **If you are worried about your milk supply.**
- **If you have questions.**

Options for Feeding Your Baby

- Have your baby brought to your workplace for feedings.
- Go to your baby during lunch or breaks to breastfeed.
- Offer your milk in a bottle.
- With an older baby (6–8 months), you may want to use a cup.
- When you are with your baby, breastfeed only—and do it often.

Things to Do before You Go Back to Work

- Lots of breastfeeding while still home helps your body make lots of milk.
- At least 2–3 weeks before going back to work, practice removing milk (express milk) from your breasts. An electric breast pump works well. So do your 2 hands!
- Express after feedings, or 1–2 times a day, when your baby is napping. If your baby wakes right afterwards and wants to breastfeed—go ahead. There will still be plenty of milk left in your breasts after expressing.
- If you will be using a bottle to give your milk, try it for the first time 2–3 weeks before going back to work; save milk in clean containers.
 - Glass or hard plastic bottles.
 - Special plastic bags designed for breastmilk (lay them flat to take less space in the freezer).
 - Label the container with the date you expressed the milk.
 - Use the oldest milk first.

Talk to Your Baby's Caregiver

- Give a list of instructions about storing and feeding your extra milk.
- Ask the caregiver to feed your milk slowly so baby does not overeat with the bottle or cup.
- Ask how the baby responds to feedings and how much baby drinks.
- Practice leaving your baby with the caregiver before you go back to work.
- Breastfeed at the caregiver's before leaving for work. If baby is asleep or you work far away from the caregiver, express your milk just before you start work.
- Plan to breastfeed as soon as you pick up your baby. Ask the caregiver not to feed your baby close to pick-up time.
- Some babies may need to suck on a pacifier when mother is away.



Breastmilk Storage Guidelines (for Healthy Term Babies)*

Human Milk	Room Temperature	Time in Refrigerator	Time in Freezer
Freshly expressed	≤6 hrs	≤5 days (term infant) ≤8 days (older child)	Ideal 3 months Optimal ≤6 months Acceptable 12 months in deep freezer (-20 degrees C)
Previously frozen thawed in refrigerator but not warmed	≤4 hrs	≤24 hrs	Do not refreeze
Previously frozen and brought to room temperature	Complete feeding, up to one hour at room temperature, then discard	≤4 hrs	Do not refreeze
Infant has started feeding	Complete feeding and refrigerate ≤4 hrs	≤4 hrs	Do not refreeze

*Adapted from Best practice for expressing, storing and handling human milk in hospitals, homes and child care settings. Human Milk Banking Association of North America, 3rd edn., 2011.

Going Back to Work

Work only 2 days in a row for a few weeks. Go back to work at the end of a work week (Thursday or Friday) and take Wednesdays off.

- Practice pumping at your work place before you start work.
- Express your milk at about the same time your baby usually breastfeeds.
- Pump “hands-free.” Cut a slit in each cup of a stretchy bra. Slide your pump flanges inside the slits.
- Store your expressed milk in a refrigerator or a cooler with frozen ice packs.
- When you pick up your baby, give the milk to the caregiver for the next day.
- If you give the caregiver frozen milk, use the oldest milk first. Only use frozen milk if you do not have any fresh milk.

Breastfeeding When You're With Your Baby

Your baby will never cease to amaze you. A healthy, full-term baby that is growing well eats when she needs or wants—and your baby likes you most of all. Your caregiver may tell you your baby does not care to drink much when you are away.

- When you are with your baby, breastfeed whenever your baby wants.
- He may want to breastfeed more often at night.
- He may breastfeed often to “catch up” and spend more time with you.
- To help you rest, breastfeed lying down.

Breastfeeding Works While You Work!

All of your efforts are worthwhile, so hang in there. Breastfeeding can continue while YOU work!

RELAXING . . . letting go . . . letting down . . . ahh . . . To help your milk to flow, when you are pumping: Have a picture of your baby, listen to calm music, imagine something peaceful. Close your eyes, relax and think about your baby. Smell something your baby just wore. Enjoy the relaxation that comes from your hormones. This is your break and you're doing something wonderful for your baby!

Network with Other Mothers
From time to time you will probably ask yourself “Why am I doing this?” Spending time with other mothers will help you stay focused on your goal. Check out www.workandpump.com. Or contact a support group: www.la lecheleague.org.

Find Help Fast

An IBCLC is an “International Board Certified Lactation Consultant:” someone with special training to help breastfeeding families. Go to “Find a Lactation Consultant” at www.ilca.org, to locate a lactation consultant in your area. You can also ask your doctor or a nurse at your hospital.

Your local lactation consultant: