

Managing Return to Work or Time Away from Your Baby

- Allow plenty of maternity leave. Consider altering your work or school schedule, at least temporarily, so you can better adjust to your new routine. Know your lawful employee rights. Ideally you will have a private and comfortable place to pump at work.

Practice bottles and Starting a freezer stash of breastmilk

- Try not to think about work during the first 3 weeks or so. Your main focus is to feed your baby and recover. Rally your troops and accept all offers of help from your people to take care of everything else.
- Starting around 3-4 weeks, offer a regular bottle. Some babies need to “practice” daily, but others remember how to bottle feed with only occasional reminders. So now you’ll need some breastmilk to put in the bottle, and perhaps start a freezer stash of breastmilk.
- Pump both breasts to empty after the first morning nursing session. After resting at night, your milk supply will be at its peak, so take advantage of this. If you want to store a lot of milk, do this every morning until you return to work and your supply will ideally increase according to supply and demand.
- Put about 3 ounces of the pumped milk in the fridge. If you pumped extra, add it to your freezer stash.
- Someone can feed your baby a “practice” bottle in place of nursing. You need to pump, to keep supply and demand in check. Freeze this milk or save it for the next “practice” bottle.
- NOTE: Your friends who build a huge freezer stash LOVE to talk about it. Who would blame them! But don’t get discouraged if you can’t do that. Most moms make just enough milk for their baby, and can’t get ahead enough to store milk, and you won’t hear from them! Do your best and be sure to “feed the baby” before you “feed the freezer.” Don’t get so eager to store milk that you deprive your baby of milk she needs NOW!

A new routine

- During your first day back at work, your baby will drink milk from your stash. From then on, the milk pumped at work today will feed your baby tomorrow, and so on. If for some reason you don’t pump enough today, you’ll need to pull from your freezer stash. If your stash runs out, you’ll need to supplement with formula.
- A new routine of pumping in place of nursing while separated from your baby could result in decreased OR increased milk production. There are predictions that can be made to keep things on track, but the plan may need adjusted now and then.
- If your pumping volumes continue to fall short of the amount your baby drinks at daycare, there may be some pitfalls to sort out, which are described below.
- The main goal is for your baby to gain weight and build brain cells. Regular well baby check-ups and monitoring the growth curve will be the best indicator that all is well.
- Consider having 2 sets of pump parts so you don’t waste time washing them during every pumping break.

When and where the calories are consumed

- It doesn’t matter exactly when the calories are consumed, as long as enough calories get into your baby in 24 hours to get satisfied and gain weight. If your baby drinks most of their calories at daycare, then you will need to pump a lot at work to keep up. However, if you spend adequate time nursing your baby at home so they get more calories that way, then less amounts of milk will need to be pumped at work. A typical pitfall is too few nursing sessions (milk removals) when you are together at home. This is because you and your baby might sleep for 8 or more hours at night, so there aren’t very many hours left to remove milk. YIKES! Yes, this might mean you’ll need to wake up and pump or do a “dream feed” (wake baby to nurse during the night) after about 5 hours. Of course, it is your choice not to do this and accept that formula will be needed.

YOU ARE UNIQUE!

- The number of times YOU need to pump at work depends on your milk storage capacity, your ability to produce milk during the stress of returning to work, how well the pump drains your milk, your work schedule and how frequently your breasts are emptied at home (by baby or pump). To make the following explanation easier, it will be assumed that your milk supply meets your baby’s demand at the time you go back to work.
- Towards the end of maternity leave, most mothers find that removing milk (by baby or pump) about 7-8 times in 24 hours maintains their supply. Mothers with a larger storage capacity might get by with removing milk as few as 5 times. Upon returning to work, the number of milk removals each 24 hours needs to stay the same.
- Some mothers find that their pump removes their milk more completely than their baby does, so their supply goes UP when they return to work. Don’t be overly jealous of this super power, because it brings its own set of problems if not managed properly! Unfortunately, some mothers never produce enough milk to meet their baby’s demand no matter how frequently or completely they drain their breasts.

Math

- Some babies gain well on less volumes of milk per day than others. Perhaps their metabolism is faster, or else their milk source is a bit higher in calories than most. Somebody figured out that most breastmilk is 20 calories per ounce, so standard infant formula is made to contain the same calories. When charts of expected milk intake are shown, realize that the numbers can vary from the norm.
- At about 4-6 weeks old and after, most babies need about 24-30oz of milk in 24 hours in order to gain proper weight. Therefore, you will ideally continue to produce that much through the first 6 months of recommended exclusive breastfeeding. After 6 months old, solid foods are added to your baby's diet, so milk intake can decrease to 20-24oz per day. As the chart below shows, you will simply divide your baby's 24 hour milk intake between daycare and home, according to how many hours you work each day.

After 4-6 weeks old, your baby likely needs 30oz of milk in 24 hours, so you need to produce 30oz in 24 hours (for the first 6 months). Assuming your baby gets steady milk intake throughout 24 hours, this chart shows where they'll be when they get their milk. It also shows how many times you need to pump at work and remove milk at home.		
Leave for work with a full baby and empty breasts. Try to time the last bottle and final pumping so you arrive home with full breasts and an empty baby.		
8 hour work day	10 hour work day	12 hour work day
Mom is at work and baby is at daycare 8hrs , so Mom and baby are at home 16hrs.	Mom is at work and baby is at daycare 10hrs , so Mom and baby are at home 14hrs.	Mom is at work and baby is at daycare 12hrs , so Mom and baby are at home 12hrs.
Baby gets 10oz at daycare and 20oz at home. So you need to pump 10oz at work.	Baby gets 12½ oz at daycare and 17½oz at home. So you need to pump 12½oz at work.	Baby gets 15oz at daycare and 15oz at home. So you need to pump 15oz at work.
If you need to remove milk 9-10 times per day (every 2 hours) you will need to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pump 4 times at work and • remove milk 6 times at home. 	If you need to remove milk 9-10 times per day (every 2 hours) you will need to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pump 4-5 times at work and • remove milk 5-6 times at home. 	If you need to remove milk 9-10 times per day (every 2 hours) you will need to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pump 6 times at work and • remove milk 6 times at home.
If you need to remove milk 7-8 times per day (every 3 hours) you will need to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pump 2-3 times at work and • remove milk 4-5 times at home. 	If you need to remove milk 7-8 times per day (every 3 hours) you will need to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pump 3-4 times at work and • remove milk 3-5 times at home. 	If you need to remove milk 7-8 times per day (every 3 hours) you will need to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pump 4 times at work and • remove milk 4 times at home.
If you need to remove milk 6 times per day (every 4 hours) you will need to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pump 1-2 times at work and • remove milk 4-5 times at home. 	If you need to remove milk 6 times per day (every 4 hours) you will need to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pump 2-3 times at work and • remove milk 3-4 times at home. 	If you need to remove milk 6 times per day (every 4 hours) you will need to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pump 3 times at work and • remove milk 3 times at home.

So you LIKE to sleep?

- You will need to figure a sleep schedule into the above equation. This will be very individualized and may change over time, be it good or bad! If your milk supply is "just enough," your supply may go down if your breasts remain full for more than 5 hours night after night, because full breasts make milk slower. If you have the super power of making lots of milk, you can likely sleep for longer stretches, IF you can tolerate how full your breasts will feel. The decision on sleep is one you'll need to come to terms with and take what you can get. There is no way around the fact that regular milk removal keeps milk supply going, because empty breasts make milk faster.

Milk supply concerns and management

- If your baby starts drinking more milk at daycare such that you need to pull milk from your freezer stash, investigate why this is happening. Are the bottles too full and milk is getting discarded? Is baby over-fed? Is your baby getting too little milk during the hours at home so makes up for it at daycare?
- Ask the care provider to pace the bottle feedings so your baby doesn't consume too much milk while at daycare.
- To increase supply, increase the daily total of milk removals (breastfeed and/or pump more). See accompanying documents for details on optimizing pumping and dealing with low supply concerns.
- How much milk is enough?** Between 1-6 months of age, most babies require about 24-32 ounces of milk per day and between 6-12 months, they need to consume 20-24 ounces each day, in addition to baby foods.
- Remember, breastfeeding doesn't have to be "all or nothing." Some breastmilk is still beneficial.