



Managing Return to Work or Time Away from Your Baby



Take as much time as possible for maternity leave. Don't think about preparing for return to work for at least 3 weeks. Rest, recover and rally your troops. They'll feed you, while you feed your baby!

Know your lawful employee rights. Negotiate for an altered return to work or school schedule so you can adjust. Find a comfortable private space at work and negotiate a pumping schedule once you know your milk production patterns.

ESTABLISH A FREEZER STASH OF BREASTMILK WHILE ON MATERNITY LEAVE

Upon return to work, you will pump milk *today* that will ideally be enough to satisfy your baby at daycare *tomorrow*. While on leave, try to build a stash of frozen milk, so that if you fail to pump enough milk *today*, you can draw from your stash for tomorrow. You'll also need milk for the first day at daycare. NOTE: Many moms produce "just enough" milk for their baby, so and can't get ahead enough to stash milk in the freezer. Moms with a huge stash love to talk about it – but rest assured, there are just as many moms without a stash. They just don't mention it.

Start pumping to build your milk stash **about 3 weeks** after birth. By then, your supply is likely pretty well established. The morning is the best time to pump, because your breasts are at their fullest. While you slept, extra energy made milk. In the morning, nurse first, and then pump to empty. Put this milk in the freezer. Make sure your baby is full before you feed the freezer! The extra milk removal should increase your supply, so you can freeze more milk until you return to work.

Note: If you are an over-producer, review the abundant milk supply handout. In this case, you will pump a few ounces off *before* you nurse in the morning. This removes the skim foremilk, so that your baby gets a breakfast of all creamy hind milk.

INTRODUCE PRACTICE BOTTLES AT 3-4 WEEKS OLD & GIVE THEM REGULARLY

Offer a bottle in place of nursing at a convenient time at least once per week. If your baby hates it, do it more often, so he doesn't forget how. Pump whenever your baby takes a bottle, to keep supply and demand in check. Freeze this milk, or save it for the next practice bottle. Watch the paced bottle-feeding video, to make sure your baby returns to the breast nicely.

FIGURE OUT "YOUR NUMBER," WHICH IS HOW MANY TIMES YOU REMOVE MILK EACH DAY

Before you return to work, note how many times you remove milk in 24 hours by nursing, pumping, and collecting leaked milk. This is "**your number**" of milk removals per 24 hours that you'll need to maintain upon return to work. If you produce "just enough" milk, your number is likely 8-10. If you produce "too much" milk by this time, your number is likely 6-8. (see below)

Milk removals at home

Upon return to work, your older baby may sleep longer stretches at night. It's nice, but you may have to choose between sleep and milk supply. Full breasts don't have room for more milk, so as a general rule, don't leave milk in your breasts more than one 5 hour stretch per 24 hours. Thus, you may need to wake up and pump, or do a "dream feed," because too few milk removals may tank your supply. The number of times you need to remove milk at home (pump or nurse) depends on how many times you pump at work, so that the total number of milk removals reaches "**your number**."

Milk removals at work

Stress affects how easily your milk lets down, and your baby may remove your milk better than a pump. Review the pumping handout and video, so your pump sessions are efficient and productive. Use a high quality double electric pump, and get a second set of pump parts. If there might be times when you can't sit down to pump, consider a battery-operated "hands free" pump for those times. They're expensive and may not remove milk as well, but it's better than skipping a session.

Do you produce "just enough" milk?

If this is you, "**your number**" is likely 8-10 milk removals per day by the time you return to work. Thus, you'll likely need to pump to empty about every 3 hours at work. It typically takes about 15 min to get empty, but some do it faster. If you don't pump enough at work today, draw from your freezer stash for daycare tomorrow. If your stash starts running low, there are things to figure out – see below. Supplement with formula if needed.

Do you produce "too much" milk?

If this is you, "**your number**" is likely 6-8 milk removal per day by the time you return to work. Thus, you'll likely get by with pumping every 4-5 hours at work. You may need to pump for a certain volume rather than for time, so you don't remove too much. Thus, you'll stop at "X ounces" rather than pumping for 15 minutes. If you remove more milk at work, than your baby removed at home, your supply may ramp up. Then you'll feel full of milk all day, and you'll be at risk for plugged ducts.

WHEN AND HOW MUCH MILK YOUR BABY DRINKS

Nutrition builds brain cells. As long as your baby’s hunger is satisfied and he gains enough weight to follow the growth curve, it doesn’t matter when in the day or night he drinks the milk. However, the feeding schedule that falls into place will affect how much you need to pump at work and also how much sleep you’ll get at night.

- If your baby gets most of his calories from pumped milk while at daycare, he’ll be less hungry and remove less milk during his time at home with you. This means you’ll need to pump more at work, or during the night, in order to provide enough pumped milk for daycare.
- If the daycare provider paces the bottles and less milk is drunk at daycare, your baby will need to drink more calories while at home with you. This could mean less sleep.

You can shift the feeding volumes and times according to what works for you, your family, and your daycare provider. The plan will change over time as your baby matures and eats more foods. Get regular well baby check-ups to monitor the growth curve.

Your baby will consume a predictable volume of milk if you feed him on demand. You can’t measure what your baby drinks directly from the breast, so it can be tricky to manage the feeding schedule for daycare. And, there’s a big range of what’s normal. Breastmilk is ~ 20 calories per ounce, but this varies between moms and over time. Also, your baby’s metabolism may be fast or slow.

- After 4-6 weeks, your baby will drink about 24-32 ounces of milk in 24 hours. This is the volume he’ll need through 6 months of age. Ideally, you will produce this volume of milk. At 6 months, add solid foods to this milk intake. When your baby eats more sources of calcium and protein, it’s OK to drink less milk. 20-24 ounces per day is a good range.
- When you return to work, you’ll divide the 24 hour total of milk volume and the total number of milk removal sessions, between daycare and home. This includes nursing and pumping.

Many parents just wing it and do great adjusting to the new working mom routine. Go for it!

Many parents like a solid and organized plan. If that’s you, read on for an example of your new routine,

Between 1 to 6 months, you’ll supply and your baby will need ~**30oz** of milk in 24 hours. An **8 hour** work day will likely separate you and your baby for ~**10 hours** (considering drop off/pick up). So, your baby will drink pumped breastmilk during those **10 hours** of separation. You’ll be together at home for the remaining ~**14 hours**, during which time you could breastfeed, but hopefully there will be a **5 hour** stretch of night-time sleep during that time span. This leaves **9 hours** of togetherness, during which time you can actually breastfeed. So, in total, there are 19 hours for your baby to drink **30oz** of milk. Some will be from the breast (which you can’t actually measure – so you’ll guess) and some will be from the bottle. When all this occurs is up to you, your baby and your caregivers. If you are a visual learner, this chart explains this.

The top row is the 24 hours in a day.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
1. Mom and baby are together at home for 14 hours.														1. Mom and baby are apart for 10 hours.									
2. Baby sleeps 5 hours.					3. Baby has 9 hours to drink milk (nurse or bottle) at home .									3. Baby has 10 hours to drink milk (bottle) at day care .									
<div style="display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <div style="margin-right: 20px;">←</div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>Divide ~30 ounces of milk into feeding sessions (nurse or bottle) during these 19 daytime hours.</p> </div> <div style="margin-left: 20px;">→</div> </div>																							
4. Mom needs to empty her breasts (nurse or pump) 8 times in 24 hours.																							

Note: 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.

DO YOU FEEL YOUR SUPPLY IS DROPPING? ARE YOU DIPPING INTO YOUR FREEZER STASH? CONSIDER THESE THINGS.

- Is there too much milk in each bottle at daycare, so milk is being thrown away?
- Is your baby drinking very little milk at home, sleeping long stretches at night, and so he makes up for it by drinking more at daycare?
- Is he over-fed at daycare? Paced bottle feedings will allow your baby to self-regulate his feedings.
- To increase supply, remove milk more times each 24 hours, by nursing or pumping.

Remember, breastfeeding doesn’t have to be “all or nothing.” Some breastmilk is still beneficial.