

The World Health Organisation recommend exclusive breastfeeding until around six months of age, the slow introduction of family foods from around six months, and continued breastfeeding until the age of two years and beyond. Many women successfully combine work and breastfeeding. Breastmilk is the normal food for babies and research tells us that breastfeeding women miss less work, and their babies are healthier. Breastmilk protects your baby from gastrointestinal, respiratory, and middle ear infections.

Discuss your breastfeeding requirements with your employer well in advance of your return (ideally before you go on maternity leave, while you are still at work.) You will require a private room (not the bathroom) with a comfortable chair, a sink for hand hygiene and to clean your equipment, a refrigerator where you can store expressed breastmilk and equipment, and time to express milk during your lunch break and other breaks if necessary. You may be able to have your baby brought to you to breastfeed.

For more information see the ABA website: [breastfeeding.asn.au/workplace](https://breastfeeding.asn.au/workplace). If you need more information about your rights talk to your Human Resources department or visit [fairwork.gov.au/leave/maternity-and-parental-leave](https://fairwork.gov.au/leave/maternity-and-parental-leave). You can also contact the Australian Human Rights Commission for advice on 1300 656 419 or <https://humanrights.gov.au/quick-guide/11991>

## During your maternity leave

- Get breastfeeding off to a great start by breastfeeding whenever your baby shows feeding cues in the first few weeks, or at least 8-12 times every 24 hours. Do not use bottles or dummies during the first month.
- Breastfeed exclusively until baby is around six months old.
- Baby is feeding well when you see six to eight pale, wet cloth nappies or five or more heavy, wet disposable nappies every 24 hours, regular soft bowel motions, and weight gain.
- Attend your local Child and Family Health clinic and/or your local group of the Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA) for continued breastfeeding support.

## Prior to returning to work

- It is helpful to build up a reserve of breastmilk in the freezer prior to returning to work. Expressing your breastmilk can take practice. Try expressing once a day; many women find it easiest to express after a morning feed. If you are unable to collect much milk, wait until 30-60 minutes after the feed, massage your breasts first and then express both breasts, squeezing your breasts as you express. This milk can be stored in food safe plastic bags or containers in the freezer. Write the date on the milk before you put it in the freezer. Expressing more than once a day may increase your supply, which could lead to full, uncomfortable breasts when you return to work. Although expressing may be difficult at first most working mothers say they improve very quickly, and the benefits are worth the initial effort. Ask for the SESLHD brochure: *Expressing and storing breastmilk*.
- Introduce your baby to a cup or a bottle before returning to work. You may like to try a cup if your baby is over 6 months. Try only small amounts at first. It will take time for your baby to learn a new method of feeding. Ask someone else to try as baby can sometimes refuse from baby's mother.
- Purchase two insulated bags and two freezer bricks – one for taking the breastmilk to your caregiver/childcare centre, and one for bringing your expressed milk home from work.
- Talk to baby's caregivers to ensure they are aware how to safely store and give your baby your breastmilk. Give them a copy of the SESLHD brochure *Expressing and storing breastmilk* and the

ABA brochure *A caregiver's guide to the breastfed baby*.

- Let your family know how important this is for you and your baby and how they can help.

### **When you return to work**

- Breastfeed your baby just before you go to work and as soon as you come home. This may help you and your child to relax and reconnect after work.
- Be prepared that your baby or child may want extra breastfeeds overnight. Sometimes babies 'wait' for larger feeds until you return and take only small amounts while you are away. This can be normal at first, just ensure their wet and dirty nappies are still regular. Older babies (from around six months) and young children can also have family foods and water while you are at work. Discuss your child's needs with your baby's caregiver, ask them to call you at work if they have any questions.
- How often you need to express at work will depend on the age of your baby and how often they are breastfeeding. Try to express around the same times baby would be feeding if you can. Many mothers find their milk flows more easily when they think about their baby. Try looking at photos of your baby or record some baby noises on your phone to help you relax. Refrigerate your milk while you are at work or store in an insulated container.
- Wear breast pads inside your bra, bring an extra layer of clothes so if you accidentally leak, you will have something to cover your top with.
- If your baby is less than six months old and you choose to stop expressing at work, or you are unable to express enough milk at work, partial breastfeeding is still beneficial to your baby. You can breastfeed your baby while you are at home and your baby can have infant formula while you are at work. Babies over six months and toddlers can breastfeed when you are at home and have family foods, water, and formula (under 12 months).

### **Tips for your caregiver for feeding your breastfed child**

- Discuss the baby's or child's feeding needs with the baby's parents.
- Feed the baby with early hunger cues.
- Expressed breastmilk can be defrosted or warmed by standing the bottle in a container of warm water. Test the temperature by dropping a few drops on your wrist. Never defrost or heat the milk in the microwave as this can cause uneven temperatures and can destroy some of the nutrients.
- If the baby refuses the milk, try calming them down with some cuddling and rocking and/or retry in another area/room. If they are using a dummy, put some milk on it to calm them, then retry.
- Pace the bottle feed by resting every few minutes. Offer frequent burp times.
- For babies under 12 months, it is essential to sterilise bottles, lids, teats, and dummies.
- If you run out of expressed breastmilk, contact the mother before giving anything else.
- Visit [www.breastfeeding.asn.au](http://www.breastfeeding.asn.au) and read *A caregiver's guide to the breastfed baby*.

#### **Resources**

- Your Midwife, Child and Family Health Nurse, or Lactation Consultant
- Australian Breastfeeding Association [www.breastfeeding.asn.au](http://www.breastfeeding.asn.au) Helpline: 1800 686 268.
- Raising Children Network [www.Raisingchildren.net.au](http://www.Raisingchildren.net.au)
- Australian Infant Feeding Guidelines (2012) [www.eatforhealth.gov.au](http://www.eatforhealth.gov.au)
- If you need an interpreter, please call Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) on 131 450

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