

Returning to work While breastfeeding

The World Health Organisation recommends babies are exclusively breastfed for six months and then to continue to breastfeed to 12 months and beyond while foods are being introduced.

It is a very personal decision on how you will feed your baby if you are returning to work during this time. While exclusive breastmilk feeding is recommended, mixed feeding of breastmilk and infant formula still benefits your baby. Any amount of ongoing breastmilk and breastfeeding is better than not breastfeeding at all.

Breastmilk protects your baby from gastro-intestinal, respiratory and middle ear infections, which can increase if your baby is separated from you and is around other babies and children. Older babies and toddlers still benefit from sustained breastfeeding beyond 12 months.

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 8-10 times every 24 hours.
- Breastfeed exclusively so your body returns to its pre-pregnant state more quickly.
- Do not use bottles or dummies during the first month. Give your baby time to become a great breastfeeding baby.
- Baby is feeding well when you see six to eight pale, wet, cloth nappies (four to five heavy, wet disposable nappies) every 24 hours, regular soft bowel motions and weight gain is evident
- Attend your local Child and Family Health clinic or local group of the Australian Breastfeeding Association for continued breastfeeding support.
- Visit this website for more information – <https://www.breastfeeding.asn.au/workplace>

Prior to returning to work

1. Talk to your employer. Inform them research tells us that breastfeeding women miss less work and babies are healthier. Negotiate a suitable place to express. If there is no designated room see if a private office, or a room that isn't used often or even a dressing room of a retail store is available. Your employer cannot ask you to express in the bathroom. Ask if the baby can be brought to you to feed. Also ask where you can store your breast milk while you are working. Obtain a copy of SESLHD handout on Expressing and Storage of breastmilk.
2. If you need more information on your rights talk to your Human Resources department, or visit <https://www.fairwork.gov.au/leave/maternity-and-parental-leave>
3. Build up a reserve of breastmilk in the freezer prior to returning to work. Expressing well can take practice. Try expressing once a day, usually after your morning feed when your breasts may feel the most full. If you don't collect much, try massaging your breasts first and then express both breasts 30-60 minutes after you finish feeding. This may work better for you. This milk can be dated and stored in BPA (Bisphenol A) free bags or glass containers in the freezer for future use. Expressing more than this may increase your supply, which could lead to full, uncomfortable breasts when you return to work.
4. Try to introduce your baby to a cup or bottle with a slow flow teat, 2 or 3 weeks before returning to work. You may like to try a cup if your baby is over 6 months. Try only small amounts at first, as these are only practice tries right now. Some babies are happier to try if they are not super hungry or even a little sleepy. Ask someone else to try as baby can sometimes refuse from baby's mother.
5. 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. If your

baby is going to a childcare centre you will need waterproof labels or a pen to label your milk.

6. 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 SESLHD Expressing and Storage of breastmilk handout.
7. Be sure to let your family know how important this is for you and your baby and how they could help.
8. Do a 'trial run' to practise
9. If after talking to your employer or HR department you still feel discriminated against, contact the Federal Commission for free advice on 1300 656 419 or <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/contact-us-2>

When you return to work

1. Feed your baby just before you go to work and as soon as you come home. This may help you to relax and reconnect with your baby after work.
2. Be prepared that your baby 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.
3. When you are at work try to express as many times as your baby would be feeding at home. Around the same time would be ideal if you can.
4. Many mothers find their milk flows easier 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.
5. Ideally refrigerate your milk while you are at work or store in insulated container.

6. Wear nursing pads inside your bra, and wear clothes in layers so if you accidentally leak you'll have something to cover your blouse/top with.
7. If the time comes that you choose to stop expressing at work, mixed feeding is still beneficial to your baby. Try breastfeeding in the morning and evening and offer infant formula during the day.

Tips for your caregiver to feeding your breastfed baby

- Feed the baby with early hunger cues.
- Expressed breastmilk can be defrosted or warmed by standing the bottle in a container of hot 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 bottle, 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 the bottle.
- If the baby takes the bottle too fast try pacing the bottle feed by resting every few minutes. Offer frequent burp times.
- Hold the baby in both right and left holds, mimicking a breastfeeding position.
- Babies are prone to infection so it is essential to keep bottles, teats, caps and dummies sterilised for the first 12 months.
- If you run out of expressed breastmilk, contact the mother before giving any extra fluids.
- Visit www.breastfeeding.asn.au and read 'A caregivers guide to the breastfed baby'

References

Eat for Health, NHMRC Feeding Guidelines Information for Health Workers, 2012
Australian Breastfeeding Association: A Caregivers Guide to the Breastfed Baby April 2013
Making it Work for Moms, New York State Department of Health

Contacts

- Your local Maternity Unit
- Your Child and Family Health Centre
- Australian Breastfeeding Association Helpline Ph: 1800 686 268, 7 days a week, or visit www.breastfeeding.asn.au
- MotherSafe (Medications in Pregnancy & Lactation Service) Ph: 02 9382 6539 or 1800 647 848 for callers outside the Sydney Metropolitan area. www.mothersafe.org.au/
- For a private Lactation Consultant (IBCLC) www.lcanz.org/find-a-consultant.htm
- After-hours telephone advice lines are listed in or on the back cover of your baby's *Personal Health Record* (Blue Book).