



NURSING & RETURNING TO WORK: WHY/WHEN/HOW?

Why?

By continuing to breastfeed after you return to work, you will:

- Provide the best nutrition for your baby
- Make it possible to keep breastfeeding when you are together
- Keep a special closeness to your baby even when you must be apart
- Save money
- Avoid the health risks associated with formula feeding
- Miss less work, because breastfed babies are sick less

When?

When you're pumping at home to build up your supply and a stash of milk, once a day is plenty. Don't make yourself crazy with it! Once you go back to work, the common guideline is once for each missed feeding. In general, this works out to about three times in a standard eight hour work day. But you'll have to adjust it according to your baby's needs and your schedule.

- If your baby nurses every two hours, you may need to spread out your pumping sessions a little more, but make them a bit longer than your baby typically nurses
- If you don't have time for enough pumping sessions during the day, nurse or pump when you get up, before you go to work, and pump after your baby goes to bed.

How long should you pump?

In short, you should pump until milk isn't coming out any more. Or, if you're trying to boost your supply, pump a little while longer after the milk stops flowing. But, in general, pumping for 15 minutes should do it for most people. If you do not have enough time for extended pumping sessions, short frequent sessions are effective as well.

How?

Start with a short week

Arrange for your first week back to start on a Wednesday or Thursday. The first days back are always overwhelming, so starting with a short week will keep you from getting too tired. It also gives you a chance to practice pumping for a couple of days, without the intimidation of a whole week looming ahead of you.

Ways to keep your milk supply up:

- Look into renting a hospital-grade breast pump.
- Nurse frequently when you are at home with your baby.
- Some mothers find it helps to take some time to prepare for pumping. Try using relaxation techniques, breast massage, and warm compresses for a few minutes before pumping. Stress and tension, as well as cool body temperature, can inhibit the milk ejection reflex and make pumping less productive.
- More short pumping sessions are more efficient than fewer longer ones.
- Make sure you're eating and drinking enough, and get plenty of rest and breastfeeding time in when you and your baby are together.
- Another idea is called "super switch nursing." When you and baby are together, you can try this technique to help increase your milk supply. It can also be done when pumping with one pump flange. This involves switching sides two or three times during each feeding. Mothers can watch the baby's sucking and switch to the other breast as soon as the sucking begins to slow down. Repeating this several times during the breastfeeding increases breast stimulation and let down.