

Returning to Work

It is entirely possible to **return to work and continue to breastfeed your baby**. You can pump your breast milk while at work, and your baby's caregiver will feed this milk in a bottle. Whenever you are with your baby, you can continue to breastfeed your baby as you did during your maternity leave.

What You Will Need:

- A quality, double electric breast pump with properly fitting parts.
- A place to store your milk at work (refrigerator or cooler with ice packs).
- A way to wash your pump parts at work (sink, cleaning wipes, steam sterilizer bags).
- A clean, private, comfortable place to pump at work that has an outlet (if needed).

How to Prepare:

From Birth–4 weeks: Establish Breastfeeding

Focus on making sure breastfeeding is comfortable for you and that your baby is getting enough milk. Reach out for help ASAP if you are having pain, nipple damage, need to supplement your baby, or have any other breastfeeding concerns.

2–6 Weeks After Birth: Practice with a Bottle

If breastfeeding is going well during the first 2 weeks, you will not need to feed your baby a bottle. We recommend introducing a bottle sometime between weeks 2 and 6 to be sure you and your baby are comfortable with bottle-feeding.

- Use the “Pumping for an Extra Bottle” sheet.
- Use “Paced Bottle-Feeding” technique (see sheet).
- Practice with a bottle about once every 2–3 days (or more often if you prefer).

4–6 Weeks Before Your Return: Start to Build Your Stash

- Set up an appointment with your Lactation Consultant (IBCLC) about 1 month before your return to work to develop a personalized plan. Your IBCLC will help you determine an appropriate amount of milk for your stash.
- Pump once each morning after a breastfeeding session and store this milk in your freezer. Typically, 1 oz. per day meets the goal by your return. You can combine milk from several days to store 3–6 oz. at a time.

1–2 Weeks Before Your Return: Schedule a Practice Run

- Schedule a half-day and full-day practice run if possible. This helps you to practice your routine, drop off/pick-up, pumping while away from baby, packing bottles, etc. prior to your first “real” day back at work.

Your First Week Back: Ease In

- Start your work week on a Wednesday or Thursday if possible.
- Try working shorter days or even half days at first.