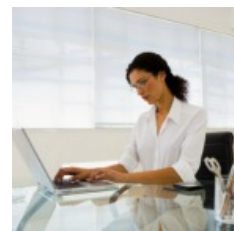




## Expressing Breastmilk On The Job

Readjusting to your previous work routine can be challenging enough without factoring in a breastfeeding schedule. Fortunately, you have taken the time to prepare your baby, your caregiver, your co-workers, and yourself for this new situation, so you are making the transition in the best possible way. Starting back to work in the middle of the work week will make it easier for everyone to adjust to the change, since this will provide you with a two- or three-day trial period before you take on a full workweek. Plan ahead to take certain items to work with you each day. Many women get everything together the night before. You will need your pump, a cooler for transporting and perhaps storing breast milk, and a lunch or snacks to help keep your energy up. You may also want to wear breast pads and pack a clean blouse or blazer in case of milk leakage or spills.



On the first day back at work, check in with your supervisor; remind him about your agreement regarding your breastfeeding schedule and make sure that the space allocated for expressing milk is still available. (If possible, visit during your maternity leave to check on the space and to finalize any arrangements. This will ease your mind on that busy first day back.) When you begin your first pumping sessions, try to relax and keep your mind off the people waiting for you outside the room. Any stress could delay your letdown reflex or reduce your milk supply, delaying your return even more. Trying to do paperwork or computer work at your desk or making phone calls while pumping is generally not effective. Thinking about your baby—how comforted she will be as she drinks your breast milk and how good for her your milk is—may help you relax and start your milk flow. Some women find that looking at a photograph of their baby or even listening to a tape of her hunger cry works like a charm.

As you adjust to your new routine, you'll learn ways to integrate your pumping schedule into your day. This will become easier as your co-workers grow used to your brief absences one to three times per day and see that you can still be productive in spite of them. You will learn how to slip discreetly out of a meeting that has run long and is interfering with your pumping schedule—just as another co-worker might excuse himself to visit the restroom. You may even find how easy it can be to recover from or laugh at any snafus—a milk stain on a blouse or an interrupted pumping session—with the help of supportive and empathetic friends.

As you continue to express breast milk at work, monitor how much you are producing. Diminished milk supply is a common problem for employed mothers and is most often the result of skipped pumping sessions or not pumping long enough. Also, pumping may not express as much milk as a baby can get from a breastfeeding session if he is an effective nurser.

To increase your supply, pump more frequently for at least ten minutes per session, even if your milk stops flowing before then. When at home with your baby, offer him the breast at least every two or three hours. If he sleeps through the night, consider waking him at your bedtime for an additional feeding. On weekends, breastfeed exclusively and nurse whenever he shows an interest.

Once your milk production has increased again, maintain your supply by drinking an adequate amount of liquids, getting enough rest, and relaxing as much as possible during pumping sessions. Remember, cutting a session short to get back to work a few minutes earlier isn't worth the cost in terms of your long-term breastfeeding relationship with your baby. If these suggestions don't help, contact your pediatrician or lactation specialist for additional advice.

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