



express yourself

As a breastfeeding mom returning to work, you'll need to learn the basics of pumping. We're here to help. > BY VANESSA GENEVA AHERN

fOR MANY NURSING MOMS, returning to work after a cozy maternity leave can bring on major angst: What if my baby won't take a bottle? How will I ever fit pumping into my already hectic workday? Aren't breast pumps pretty complicated? The emotional transition from round-the-clock breastfeeding and bonding to 9-to-5 pumping can be tough. But with a little planning and this back-to-work primer, you'll be prepared to tackle the logistics of continued breastfeeding—and your baby will reap the rewards for years to come.

Make friends with the bottle

Many nursing moms make the mistake of not introducing their baby to a bottle until they return to work, only to find that the baby won't take the bottle. To head off this disaster, you need to get your child accustomed to a bottle fairly early—most experts recommend introducing one filled with pumped breast milk at about 3 or 4 weeks of age, when breastfeeding is firmly established; if you give one too early, your baby may come to favor the faster, easier flow of the bottle over your breast. (Remember: Breast milk alone is recommended for the first four to six months, which means no formula or solids.)

In addition to targeting the right age at which to give that first bottle, it's also important to choose the right moment. "We recommend that the baby be calm and not too hungry when the bottle is introduced," says Katy Lebbing, an international board-certified lactation consultant and manager of the Center for Breastfeeding Information at La Leche League International. "Otherwise, she may be so frantic, she won't take it." Since she may not accept a bottle from you—and why would she, when the real thing is right there?—your husband or a caregiver will probably need to offer it.

Get pumped

In order to offer your baby a bottle of breast milk, you need to first express that milk. In other words, you need to pump. The best time to do this is typically right after the first nursing session of the morning, when your milk supply is at its highest; even after a full nursing session, you should have enough milk left over to



Continuing to breastfeed takes commitment, but it's well worth the effort.

express. Plan on it taking about 15 minutes—since your baby has already nursed, she should be content while you pump.

When you're finished pumping, store your milk in either the refrigerator or the freezer—it will stay fresh for eight days in the fridge and three to four months in the freezer. Be sure you use storage bags made especially for breast milk; they are sanitized,

click

Got an off-site meeting planned and not sure where you'll pump? For answers to this and other workplace dilemmas, visit fitpregnancy.com/pumpingsolutions.

freezer-safe and leak-proof, according to Lebbing. Store your milk in 2- or 4-ounce servings—the likely amount your baby will take in one feeding—to avoid wasting any of your “liquid gold.”

As for how often to pump: Experts recommend once a day, several days per week, to build up your supply for when you go back to work; they also advise giving your baby a few bottles a week. This way, she will stay familiar with the bottle and you won't use up your precious milk stores. (If you pump five days a week before you return to work and give your baby three bottles, that leaves two bags per week for storage.)

Find a spot at work

In addition to the breast pump itself (see box below), perhaps the most important aspect of pumping at work is finding a place to do it. In a perfect world, you'd have your own office with a door that locks, a mini-fridge and a comfy chair, but even without these perks, you can find a place to pump. You just might have to be a little creative.

If possible, take a tour through your office before you return to work to

research suitable spaces. If the only private spot is the bathroom, try to bring in a comfortable chair so you don't have to sit on a toilet. Also make sure the area is as hygienic as possible (antibacterial wipes come in handy here), and check that your pump has a battery converter because you may not have access to an electrical outlet, advises Kirsten Berggren, a certified lactation counselor and the author of *Working Without Weaning: A Working Mother's Guide to Breastfeeding* (Hale Publishing). Other ideas:

- **Create a space** Are there folding screens or cornered-off cubicles you can use? What about a storage closet? If you play music to disguise the hum of the pump, no one will know what you're up to in there.

- **Use your vehicle** You can easily pump in your car by parking in a private spot and taking advantage of a few well-placed sunshades. Just make sure your pump can be operated via battery or has an AC adapter to plug into your car's cigarette lighter.

- **Ask around** Did any of your co-workers face the same pumping-at-work conundrum? Ask for their tips.

And, perhaps most important, don't be afraid to ask your employer for help

Which pump is best for you?

DOUBLE ELECTRIC PUMP

BEST FOR: Women who are working full time and thus pumping several times a day, as it expresses both breasts at once.

SPEED: A pumping session typically requires about 15 minutes.

COST: You can either buy your own (prices range from approximately \$220 to \$370) or rent one. If you rent, the rate can range from \$50 to \$95 per month depending on the type of pump you want and where you live; renting also requires an initial expenditure of about \$50 to \$60 for certain parts you'll need to purchase.

SINGLE ELECTRIC OR MANUAL PUMP

BEST FOR: Women who work part time or need to pump only occasionally, as these are typically less expensive yet still quite effective.

SPEED: A pumping session with a single electric usually requires about 30 minutes; with a manual pump, it typically takes about 40.

COST: Prices start at around \$45 for manuals and range from about \$35 to \$170 for single electrics.

For information on finding the pump that best fits your needs, contact La Leche League International at l.li.org; they can put you in touch with a breast pump specialist in your area.

in finding—or creating—a space to pump. “Be upfront and tell your boss what you’ll be doing,” advises Jennifer Bowen Hicks, editor of *Hirkani’s Daughters: Women Who Scale Modern Mountains to Combine Breastfeeding and Working* (La Leche League International). “This gives him a chance to show that he’s on board and supporting the employees.”

Companies that support breastfeeding help improve their image, Hicks adds; pro-breastfeeding plans and family-friendly policies make great PR, which can in turn bring new business and attract high-quality employees. If your boss isn’t accommodating, find out your rights: 20 states have laws pertaining to breastfeeding in the workplace. For information, visit nclsl.org/programs/health/breast50.htm.

Easing back in

For many working moms, the first week back is the hardest emotionally—you’ve never had to leave your baby before! Speak with your employer about ways to make the transition smoother. Maybe day 1 can be on a Thursday, or see if you can work a few half days in the beginning.

If you work a typical eight-hour day, experts suggest that you nurse right before you leave for work; pump at mid-morning and mid-afternoon, adding a third session, if possible; and breastfeed your baby when you get home (the morning and after-work nursing sessions are in addition to any others your baby might want). Breast milk remains fresh at room temperature for 10 hours, but experts nevertheless recommend storing it in a refrigerator or a small cooler with ice packs.

Be sure to bring these items with you when you head back to the office: **Your trusty pump**, preferably one with a carrying bag to make transport easy.

Nursing bottles or bags for storing your expressed milk.

Nursing pads to hide embarrassing leaks.

Pumping perks

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Office on Women’s Health, babies who are breastfed exclusively for the first six months of life are less likely to suffer ear infections, diarrhea, respiratory infections and childhood obesity. But your baby isn’t the only one who will benefit from continued breastfeeding: The longer you nurse your child, the more you reduce your lifetime risk of developing ovarian or breast cancer.

An extra shirt to change into in case you make a mess when pumping.

A “hands-free” helper Easy Expression makes a bustier that fits over your bra and enables you to pump *sans* hands. Visit easyexpressionproducts.com.

Breast pump wipes Medela Quick Clean Wipes allow you to clean your pumping supplies on the spot. Otherwise, rinsing well after each use and washing with soap and hot water at the end of the day is fine. Visit medela.com.

Photos of your baby to encourage your body to release oxytocin, the “hormone of love” that helps you relax and also stimulates milk letdown.

And, of course, bring your positive attitude. “Going back to work and continuing to breastfeed takes some organization and planning,” Hicks says. “Yes, it’s going to feel tedious sometimes, but it really doesn’t take that much time out of your life, and the benefits to your baby will last her a lifetime.”

Vanessa Geneva Ahern is a freelance writer in Woodstock, N.Y., and mother of two.

Must-reads for working moms

* *The Milk Memos: How Real Moms Learned to Mix Business and Babies—and How You Can Too* by Cate Colburn-Smith and Andrea Serrette (Tarcher/Penguin)

* *Nursing Mother, Working Mother: The Essential Guide to Breastfeeding Your Baby Before and After You Return to Work* by Gayle Pryor and Kathleen Huggins (Harvard Common Press)