

Transitioning Back to Work

Planning Ahead

- 1. Talk to your supervisor before you take maternity leave and let him/her know that you plan to continue breastfeeding after you return to work.** Pumping while away from your baby on the same schedule that she or he breastfeeds ensures that you keep up your milk supply to meet your baby's needs.
- 2. Find a space or visit the lactation room before you leave so that you will know exactly what to expect and what you will need when you return.** . A "pumping room" can be created in any area that provides privacy. The area should contain a chair and working electric outlets. A sink is helpful for cleaning up and a refrigerator is helpful for storing milk. Insulated cooler bags to be used with an ice pack are available in the Office of Human Resources for storing the freshly pumped milk. Southern Connecticut State University has one lactation room located in Connecticut Hall, however those who have private offices may prefer to remain in them. If neither option is workable, Human Resources is available to help you consider alternatives.
- 3. Figure out what pump accessories you will need to bring.** An insulated cooler bag to be used with an ice pack to store pumped breast milk during the work day is available in the Office of Human Resources.
- 4. Pace yourself if possible.** Return to your job midweek or part time. This may help smooth the transition for both you and your baby. As difficult as this may seem, take time to nurture your own well-being. Taking the baby for a walk is enjoyable for your baby, and it's good exercise for you. Rely on easy-to-prepare meals or a relaxing bath after putting your baby to bed to help ease stress. If you feel less stressed, you'll be able to better enjoy your baby when you're together.

Talking to Your Supervisor

- 1. Let your employer know that you plan to continue breastfeeding.** Explain that, when you're away from your baby, you will need to take breaks throughout the day to pump your milk to give to your baby at a later time. Ask where you can pump at work, and make sure it is a private, clean, quiet area, or register with the Office of Human Resources to use the lactation room located in Connecticut Hall. Also make sure you have somewhere to store the milk. Insulated cooler bags are available to use with an ice pack at the Office of Human Resources. Discuss how you plan to fit pumping into your workday. You can use your breaks and lunch hour or perhaps you can offer to work out a different schedule, such as coming in earlier or leaving a little later each day to make up for any lost work time. If your day care is close by to your job, you may be able to arrange to breastfeed your baby during work time. Make sure to discuss the benefits of breastfeeding with your employer, especially that breastfeeding mothers miss fewer days from work. If your direct supervisor cannot help you with your needs, you should be able to go to the Office of Human Resources to make sure you are accommodated.

2. There are no University policies which specifically address the rights of breast feeding women or usage of the lactation rooms. Employees and supervisors are encouraged to work together within University policies regarding breaks and hours of work to accommodate those who wish to use the facilities. The employee and her supervisor should agree on the timing of these breaks. See www.lalecheleague.org/Law/Bills38.html for Connecticut State Laws on breastfeeding.

Before Returning to Work

- 1. Some mothers start pumping and storing their milk ahead of the time.** This will allow you return to work and have a supply available for the first week when you are separated from the baby. This will also give you the opportunity to see how the pump works.
- 2. Plan a “dry-run” with your childcare provider.** Have the baby stay with her/him for a few hours/day for several days to help ease the transition. Doing so may ease the initial anxiety of being away from your child and help you concentrate on your work responsibilities.
- 3. Introduce bottles to your baby.** Sometime after four to six weeks — but before you return to work — introduce your baby to bottles filled with breast milk. This will give you both a chance to get used to some feedings by bottle. Because your baby associates you with breast-feeding, it might be easier if someone else gives your baby the first bottle feedings.
- 4. Accept that you may feel guilty or sad at times.** If you're like a lot of mothers, you'll struggle with feelings of guilt. You might feel sad that you can't spend as much time as you'd like with your baby. These feelings are common, and it might help to discuss them with your friends or other mothers in similar circumstances. Talk to your spouse about how you're feeling. If your sadness or guilty feelings are increasing or overwhelming, mention them to your doctor.
- 5. Establish a support system.** Do not try to do it all yourself. Ask for help from your partner, family members and friends. Seek out other working mothers who can offer support as you make the transition back to work.

Pumping Your Breast

No matter what type of job you have, if you go back to work after having your baby, it should be possible for you to take time to pump your breast milk. If you are staying home to care for your baby, having an effective pump at home is also helpful. You can use it to help relieve engorgement, especially when your milk supply first comes in, or for when you need to be away from your baby for any amount of time.

1. Expressing milk through pumping is a learned skill that's both physical and psychological. It takes about the same time as breastfeeding, unless you are using a "double" automatic breast pump. The let-down reflex is important during pumping in order to express a good amount of milk. If you are having problems getting your milk to "let-down" at the start of pumping, you may find it helpful to have a picture of your baby

close-by. You also can try other things to stimulate the let-down reflex, like applying a warm, moist compress to the breast, gently massaging the breasts, or just sitting quietly and thinking of a relaxing setting. Try to clear your head of stressful thoughts. Use a comfortable chair or pillows. Once you begin expressing your milk, think about your baby.

2. Drink plenty of fluids. Water, juice and milk can help you stay hydrated. But limit soda, coffee and other caffeinated drinks. Too much caffeine can reduce your milk supply. Have a beverage to drink before and/or during pumping.

Sample Breastfeeding Schedule

This sample schedule is for a full-time working mother with a three month old baby.

- 6:30 a.m. -- Breastfeed baby at home
- 8:00 a.m. -- Begin work
- 9:30 a.m. -- Break to pump
- 12:30 p.m.-- 10-20 minutes to pump during lunch
- 3:30 p.m. -- Break to pump
- 6:00 p.m. -- Breastfeed baby at caregiver's or at home

Storing and Saving Breast Milk

It is important to know the guidelines for storing breast milk properly so that you always give your baby fresh milk. Any container used to store milk should be clean and sterile. Always try to leave an inch or so from the milk to the top of the container since frozen milk expands. After pumping your milk, it is helpful to label the storage container. Always use the oldest dated milk first.

The following are some general breast milk storage guidelines:

- At room temperature (less than 77°F) for 4 to 8 hours
- At the back of a refrigerator for 3 to 8 days
- At the back of a freezer for up to 3 months

It is helpful to freeze the milk in small amounts, such as 2 to 4 ounce servings, so there is less waste and you can choose the amount of milk depending on the baby's hunger.

It is normal for stored breast milk to separate in its container into two parts, what looks like cream and then a lighter colored milk. Some human milk also varies in color and can be blueish, yellowish, or brownish. Just gently shake the milk before feeding to mix it back together.

Breast milk doesn't take long to thaw or warm up. Never place a bottle or bag of breast milk in the microwave. Once frozen milk is thawed, it can be refrigerated, but not re-frozen.

Breast Feeding Resources

American Academy of Pediatrics, www.aap.org

La Leche League International, www.lalecheleague.org

Mayo Clinic, www.mayoclinic.com

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