

# Working girls

Fretting about the end of your maternity leave? Good news: You can still breastfeed when you head back to the office.

**Many moms think** they have to throw in the breastfeeding towel when it's time to return to work. Not so! With just a little planning and commitment, plus our step-by-step primer, you'll be prepared to tackle the logistics of continued nursing.

## 1) Start giving your baby a bottle fairly early

Many breastfeeding moms make the mistake of not introducing their babies to a bottle until they return to work, only to find that the infants won't *take* the bottle. To head off this disaster, you need to get your child accustomed to a bottle at a fairly young age—most experts recommend introducing one filled with pumped breast milk at about 3 weeks of age, when breastfeeding is firmly established. (Don't give a bottle much earlier than this; if you do, your baby may come to favor its faster, easier flow.) If your baby won't take a bottle from you—and why would she, when the real thing is right there?—your partner or other family member might need to do it.

## 2) Make friends with your trusty breast pump

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

When you're finished pumping,



### Work it out

Your breasts may not be there, but your breast milk can be.

**did you know?** In addition to federal regulation, 24 states have laws pertaining to breastfeeding and work. Visit [ncsl.org/programs/health/breast50.htm](http://ncsl.org/programs/health/breast50.htm).

store your milk in either the refrigerator or the freezer—it will stay fresh for five days in the fridge and five months in the freezer. Be sure to use storage bags made especially for breast milk; they are sanitized, freezer-safe and leakproof, says Katy Lebbing, an international board-certified lactation consultant and manager of the Center for Breastfeeding Information at La Leche League International. Store your milk in 2- or 4-ounce servings (the amount your baby will likely take in one feeding) to avoid wasting any of your “liquid gold.”

Experts recommend pumping once a day, several days per week, to build up your supply for when you go back to work. Plan on giving your baby a few bottles each week; this way, she'll stay familiar with the bottle and you won't use up your precious milk supply. (If you pump, say, five days a week and give your baby three bottles, that leaves two bags per week for storage.)

### 3) Find a suitable place to pump at work

Federal law now requires that companies with 50 or more employees provide the time, as well as a private space other than the bathroom, for nursing mothers to pump. If you work for a smaller company, you may need to be creative in finding a space. If you're lucky enough to have your own office with a door that locks, you're basically set. If not, take a tour through your workplace before you return to work to look for appropriate spaces. If the only place is the bathroom, try to bring in a chair so you don't have to sit on the 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 in case you don't have

access to an electrical outlet, advises Kirsten Berggren, Ph.D., C.L.C., 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 that 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.

\* **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 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 in finding—or creating—a space. Most companies realize the importance of keeping their employees happy and will be willing to help.

### 4) Ease back into work

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

### 5) Schedule your nursing and pumping times

For a typical eight-hour workday, experts suggest that you nurse right before you leave for work and again when you get home, in addition to any other times your baby might want. At work, try to pump at the times your baby would normally nurse; plan on two sessions every day, three if you can swing it.

**click**

**Workplace woes** Got an off-site meeting planned and not sure where you'll pump? For answers to this and other workplace dilemmas, visit [fitpregnancy.com/motherhood/breastfeeding/pumping-real-world](http://fitpregnancy.com/motherhood/breastfeeding/pumping-real-world).

## 6) Plan ahead to have the right gear on hand

Be sure to bring these items with you when you head back to the office:

- \* **Your trusty pump** Look for one that comes with a carrying bag to make transport easy.
- \* **Breast milk storage bottles or bags** Try the ones from Simplisse ([simplisse.com](http://simplisse.com)).
- \* **Nursing pads** These are essential in case you spring a leak.
- \* **An extra shirt** You'll want something to change into in case you make a mess when pumping.
- \* **A "hands-free" helper** Many companies make bustiers that attach over your bra, enabling you to pump without holding the pump flanges. We like the ones from Simple Wishes ([simplewishes.com](http://simplewishes.com)) and Medela ([medelabreastfeedingus.com](http://medelabreastfeedingus.com)).
- \* **A small cooler with ice packs** Breast milk remains fresh at room temperature for only five hours, so you'll need to store pumped milk in a refrigerator or cooler.
- \* **Breast pump wipes** Medela Quick Clean Breastpump & Accessory 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 are fine.
- \* **Photos of your baby** Experts say the images will encourage your body to release oxytocin, the "hormone of love" that helps you relax and stimulates milk letdown.

And, of course, be sure to bring your positive attitude. "Going back to work and continuing to breastfeed takes some organization and planning," says Jennifer Bowen Hicks, editor of *Hirkani's Daughters: Women Who Scale Modern Mountains to Combine Breastfeeding and Working* (La Leche League International). "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 the Hudson Valley area of New York.



## Which pump is best for you?

If you'll be working full time and thus pumping several times a day, a double electric pump is the way to go so you can express both breasts at once. (Can you say "milk maid?") Women who work part time often opt for single-electric or manual pumps, as these are typically less expensive yet still quite effective.

If you buy a manual or single electric, prices start at around \$95 for manuals and up to about \$170 for single electrics. If you want a double electric, you can either buy your own (prices range from about \$220 to \$370) or rent one. If you rent, the rate can range from \$50 to \$95 per month; renting also requires an initial expenditure of about \$50 to \$60 for certain parts you'll need to purchase.

For information on finding a pump that fits your needs, contact La Leche League International ([llli.org](http://llli.org)); they can put you in touch with a breast pump specialist in your area.