

## Returning to work and breastfeeding (0–18 months)

---

### Benefits of breastfeeding after your return to work

It's worth considering all your breastfeeding options when you return to work. Continuing to breastfeed maintains the bond between your baby and you, and it can be very rewarding for both of you when you're together. Your baby will reap the many benefits of breastmilk for as long as you keep breastfeeding.

When employers support their workers to breastfeed, the benefits include increased staff retention, reduced costs, improved staff satisfaction and morale, and reduced sick leave and absenteeism.

If you want to keep breastfeeding when you return to work, discuss your breastfeeding needs with your employer well before you go back to work.

### Mums returning to work: Breastfeeding options

There are many ways to keep breastfeeding after you return to work. What works for you will depend on your workplace and child care arrangements.

You might be able to have your baby placed at a child care facility near your workplace so you can have him brought to you for breastfeeding when needed.

Or you might consider doing a mix of:

- breastfeeding before and after work and at night
- bottle-feeding with expressed breastmilk or infant formula during the day when you're at work.

### Expressing breastmilk at work: Tips for what you'll need

If your baby drinks expressed breastmilk while you're at work, you would need to express at work to maintain your milk supply, and leave this milk for your baby while you're working.

If you're expressing at work, an electric breast pump can make expressing milk quicker. There are also certain things you need in your workplace:

- a private area (not the toilet) with a comfortable chair
- a refrigerator or freezer for storing expressed breastmilk
- somewhere to store an electric or manual breast pump
- a power point close to a low table, next to the chair (if you're using an electric breast pump)
- a wash basin to wash hands and rinse out pump parts
- enough time to express milk during your lunch break and any other breaks if needed.

## Tips for breastfeeding after your return to work

Here are some ideas to help you continue to feed your baby breastmilk after your return to work:

- Plan ahead and start expressing a few weeks before returning to work so you can have some breastmilk in storage.
- You might like to express your breastmilk at work at similar times to when your baby usually feeds.
- Safely transport your breastmilk home in an insulated container like a cooler bag with an ice pack. If the milk has been frozen, use it within four hours of thawing and don't refreeze it.
- If you're finding expressing difficult, you might want to use a photo of your baby or a piece of clothing he's worn (so it carries his smell) to help your let-down reflex.

Your baby will have some adjusting to do when you start to express at work. Help your baby get familiar with his caregiver and the change in feeding routine by arranging for the caregiver to give your baby some expressed milk via a cup or bottle before you go back to work.

Sometimes breastfeeding babies will refuse a bottle or cup if they know their mums are nearby. If this happens, your caregiver might introduce the bottle or cup when you are not around. Leaving the caregiver with a piece of your clothing can help to settle your baby if he gets upset because you aren't there.