Practical Tips for a Nursing Mothers’ Return to Work

Planning ahead is a key for all new parents to realize a successful return to work. As a nursing mother there are a number of additional issues for which you need to plan.

Talk with your supervisor about your plan to continue to breastfeed

- Tell your supervisor as soon as practicable about your plan to continue breastfeeding after you return to work from maternity/child care leave and that you will need an accommodation for flexible time. Explain your needs and present her/him with a plan that outlines the amount of time that you will need and an anticipated schedule. Be sure to include reasonable unpaid break time and/or the use of your paid breaks or meal times. Consider time at the beginning or end of the day to make up the time used to express milk.
- Reassure your supervisor that pumping won’t interfere with your work and takes into account the needs of your work unit. Let your supervisor know that providing breast milk for your baby will allow you to commit more fully to your job since your baby is less likely to be sick and will reduce your stress and time away from work. The websites listed on this page can provide you with some additional facts.
- If you need help talking to your supervisor, or feel you are not being supported, please contact your Human Resources Officer or NYU Family Care (212-998-9085) for assistance.

Identify a private space for pumping

- Work with your supervisor to identify a private space for pumping. A “lactation room” can be created in any area that provides privacy. At a minimum, the area should contain a comfortable chair, working electric outlet, a small table, and a locking door. A sink with running water in or near the room is helpful for cleaning up. A refrigerator is useful for storing milk however insulated bags work well.
- NYU has two Nursing Mother Rooms specially designed for nursing mothers located near Washington Square Park. Both are equipped with changing tables for those occasions when you bring your child to work. Contact NYU Family Care (212-998-9085 or family.care@nyu.edu) to visit and register to use one of the dedicated nursing rooms.
- Individuals who have private offices may prefer to remain in them as they express milk during the day; or schedule time in an available office or conference room. If you use your office or other location consider placing a sign outside the door to let people know that you are busy or the room is occupied and when it will be free.
Buy a good pump and practice for two weeks before your return to work

- Purchase a breast pump several weeks before you plan to return to work. Seek guidance and recommendations from your physician and friends. The website Baby Loves Your Milk (www.babylovesyourmilk.com) offers information on selecting a breast pump.

- Practice pumping your breasts for two weeks before returning to work. You can try pumping just after your baby feeds, or between your baby’s feedings. Practicing at home and in other settings will help you learn how to use and clean your pump and feel more confident and comfortable when you return to work. During these sessions you also can collect and store extra milk for the first days you return to work.

- Use this time to establish a comfortable routine when you pump. Some women find that hold or look at a picture of your baby help with the letdown of milk. Others find that listening to music or reading a magazine or book creates the sense of calm that is helpful to pumping. Following this same routine each time will help you express milk when you return to work.

Determine how you will store and save your bottled expressed milk

- Pumped milk should be cooled and stored in a refrigerator or frozen as soon as possible. If a refrigerator is not available, an insulated bag will keep your milk cold while at work and during transport to home. Many pumps designed for the workplace come with an insulated pouch. In those cases when access to a refrigerator is not possible you can store your breast milk at room temperature (less than 72°F) for up to 10 hours.

- You can store your milk in daily amounts. It can be stored in a plastic or glass bottle with a sealable top. Keep in mind that your baby will want more milk during growth spurts. The best way to increase your milk supply for a growth spurt is to breastfeed or pump more often.

Dress appropriately

- Take account of the clothing that you wear to work. While you continue to nurse you will want to wear easy access clothing that opens in the front that is neither clingy nor sheer.

- It is also a good idea to wear patterned clothing since milk leakage is much harder to detect on patterned materials.

- Be sure to have an extra shirt, sweater, or vest available in case your milk leaks.
Plan your return to work

- Consider returning to work for a short week so that you can get used to leaving your baby in child care and to the routine of expressing milk in a new, unfamiliar setting and during the workday.

Schedule your sessions on your calendar

- Schedule your pumping sessions as you would a meeting. Even if you have to cut your time short it is best to maintain your schedule; a shortened pumping session is better than none at all.
- Contact NYU Family Care (212-998-9085) the week before your return to work to schedule time in one of the NYU Nursing Mother Rooms.

Take good care of your body

- Eat healthy foods and drink plenty of fluids throughout the day. The USDA [http://www.mypyramid.gov/mypyramidmoms/breastfeeding_nutrition_needs.html](http://www.mypyramid.gov/mypyramidmoms/breastfeeding_nutrition_needs.html) provides information and guidelines about how to best meet your nutrition needs.
- Have a beverage to drink before and/or during pumping. Limit your intake of caffeinated beverages, soda, and fruit drinks.
- Have nutritious snacks at your work desk.

Talk with friends and lactation experts

- Before you return to work talk with other women who continued to breastfeed their child when they returned to work. Seek guidance and tips on how to accomplish both without compromising your commitment to either.
- Ask your doctor for a referral to a lactation consultation for continuing support or use the International Lactation Consultant Association [http://www.ilca.org/](http://www.ilca.org/) search engine to identify a lactation consultant near your home or work.

(Adapted from Motherwear’s Essential Breastfeeding Guide - www.motherwear.com/br/pdfs/Section5.pdf)