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the working parent's
guide to breastfeeding
and pumping

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the working parent's guide to breastfeeding and pumping

Settling into a routine after adding a new family member is no easy feat. Then, just when you're starting to figure things out, you have to head back to work. This transition can introduce all number of challenges for parents, including a fluctuating milk supply and experimenting with new a breastfeeding schedule. But a little prep work can go a long way.

With that in mind, we've compiled a list of our best tips for parents who plan to breastfeed and pump after returning to work.

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start prepping three to four weeks before your return date:

This will give you enough time to build up an adequate breast milk supply, gather the appropriate supplies, and ensure your workplace is ready to accommodate you.



Employers are also required to provide “a place, other than a bathroom, which may be used by an employee to express breast milk.”

learn your workplace breastfeeding and pumping rights:

The Affordable Care Act requires employers to provide “reasonable break time for an employee to express breast milk for her nursing child for one year after the child’s birth each time such employee has need to express the milk,” according to the **Department of Labor’s webpage**. Employers are also required to provide “a place, other than a bathroom, that is shielded from view and free from intrusion from coworkers and the public, which may be used by an employee to express breast milk.”

Certain jobs are federally exempt from these protections. (Believe it or not, most teachers do not have federally protected pumping time!) Check **here** to see if your rights are protected by your state, however. If your state doesn’t provide pumping protection and you’re a member of a union, this may afford you separate protection.

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understand your milk supply:

Refresh yourself memory about the details of milk production in order to maximize your supply when you're away from your baby.

Calculate how many times a day you typically breastfeed and figure out how many fewer times you'll be breastfeeding while at work. Another thing to consider is how much milk you'll need per bottlefeed. The average baby consumes 25-30 oz. of milk total per day, so you can likely divide 25 oz. by the number of nursing sessions to figure out an approximate number per feed. For instance: If your baby eats seven times per day, $25/7 =$ approx 3.5 oz. per feeding. You can also test out this [milk calculator](#).

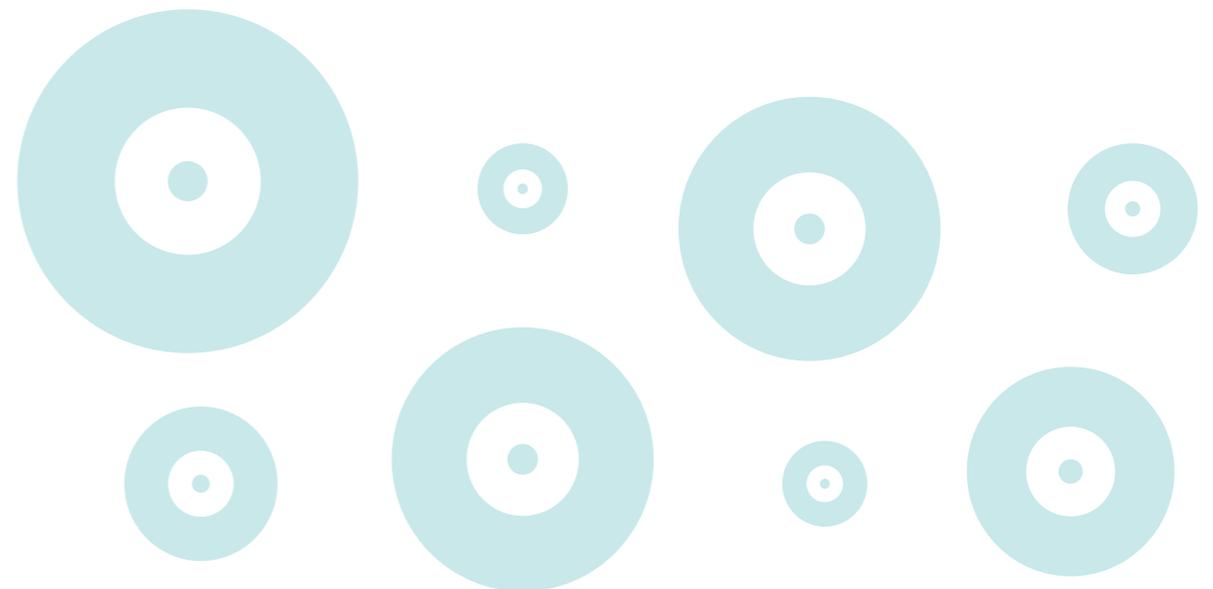
Many people find their milk supply tanks soon after going back to work. Why? They simply aren't getting enough breast stimulation. Think about ways to minimize this effect and consider returning to work gradually, if possible. Here's a few ideas:

Can you work part-time before becoming full-time again?

Can you work from home certain days?

If you have to be away from your baby during weekdays, try to schedule your first day back on a Thursday or Friday so you have the whole weekend to reconnect. This can help ease the transition.

If you're a freelancer, can you run home to feed your baby between meetings or sessions? Can you limit the amount of meetings you do per day or spread them out more? Can your baby be brought to you for a nursing session between meetings?



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gather your supplies for work:

Make sure you have access to the following tools:

Lactation-friendly clothes

A breast pump to stay at work—assuming you work at one place. Almost everyone is eligible for a free breast pump through insurance. Some may prefer to purchase a second pump for work, or ask their workplace to provide pumping bases. (You'll need to purchase the adapter kit.)

A travel breast pump if you are on the go for work. Options include a manual hand pump (which is small, cheap, and easy) or a wireless pump, which is expensive but fits in your bra and talks to your phone. There are also breast pump adapter kits which attach to your breast pump, but easily slip under your bra and shirt.

Storage containers and ice packs to transport your pumped milk home

Lube for your boobs (like coconut oil)

Something that smells like your baby to help with milk letdown

Videos and pics of your baby on your phone

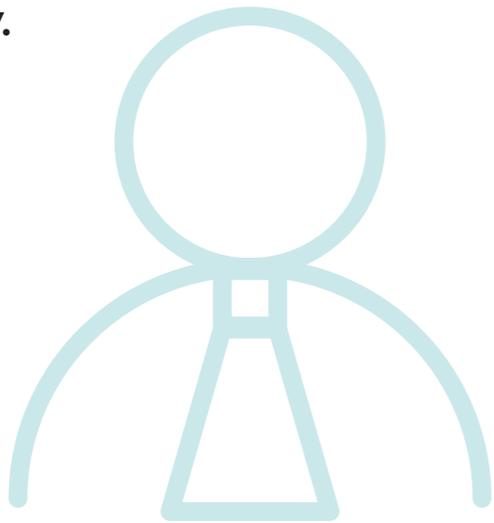


“Discuss your pumping plan with your boss and let them know how much time you will need.”

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talk with your boss:

Discuss your pumping plan. Ask if there's a lactation room available and learn how to gain access. If there's no room, figure out where you'll pump. Let them know you'll need approximately 15-20 minutes to pump, plus 5-10 minutes to clean up and store the milk. Most people need to pump between two and four times per day.



“Introduce the bottle well before you go back to work, so your baby will become familiar and won't reject it.”

talk with your childcare provider:

Ask your caretaker not to do a big bottlefeed before you pick up or come home to your baby. One of the best ways to keep supply up is to breastfeed right at the daycare or right when you get home.

You can also teach your caregiver about **Paced Bottle Feeding**.

Introduce the bottle well before you go back to work, so your baby will become familiar and won't reject it. Most people like to introduce a bottle between four and six weeks of age, since some babies will not take a bottle past eight weeks.

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what to know about reverse cycling:



Reverse cycling is when babies start to nurse more frequently at night and nurse or bottlefeed less frequently during the day. This is a common reaction when the lactating parent goes back to work.

Some parents love this, because they get to nurse more and make up for the missed time during the day. It also may also mean they need to pump less during the day. Other lactating parents find reverse cycling challenging because it means waking up more at night, even though they're back to work all day. Be sure to sleep very near your nursling to make nighttime feeding quicker and easier. Be patient and give it a few weeks. If the reverse cycling continues and it's not working for you, you can establish a new routine when you are ready.

let that milk flow! a few tips to make it easier to letdown when pumping:

Set aside enough time so that you are not stressed or rushing. It often helps to put pumping times in your calendar—just like you do with any other meeting or commitment.

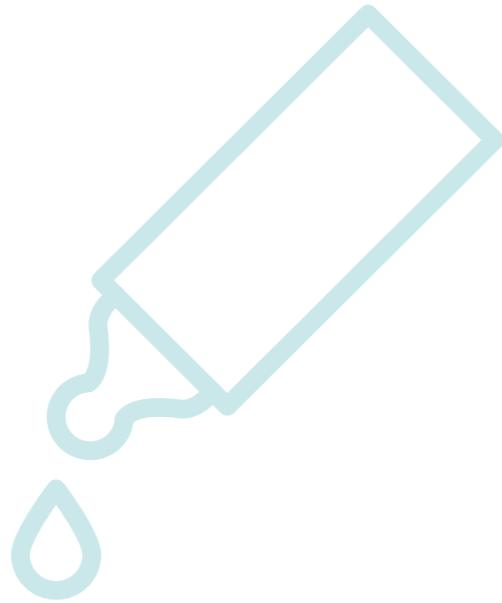
Invite relaxation and think about your baby right before you pump. Smelling a baby blanket and/or watching a cute video of your babe can help.

Find your “breast milk buttons.” Some of us have spots that we can press on our breasts which encourage more milk letdown.

Are you a person who needs to massage your breasts the whole time to get good milk flow? Try a pumping massage bra.

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milk storage guidelines:



According to the **CDC**, freshly expressed breast milk can stay at room temperature for four hours, lasts four days in the refrigerator, and lasts 6-12 months in a normal freezer. Thawed (previously frozen) milk is good on the counter for one to two hours, or one day in the fridge. It should not be refrozen.

Remember, breast milk in a bottle cannot be reused if your baby doesn't take it all. Be sure to put small amounts in bottles so you don't have to waste precious milk.

breast milk shipping and travel tips:



Ask your boss if they contract with any services that offer breast milk shipping. If you're a freelancer, you can either use a breast milk shipping company or follow these tips to ship milk on your own.

Order a cold shipping package from a nationally recognized shipping company. Either have it sent to your hotel (with 48 hours notice) or bring it with you.

Load your sealed containers of milk into the box. Activate the cooler engine on the box. (You can buy replacement engines for the future.)

Book a hotel room with a fridge/freezer combo. Consider booking a room with a microwave and/or kitchenette, which makes cleaning and sterilizing pump parts easier. Ideally your hotel should be able to help arrange shipping, too.

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Bring a hand pump or practice using your own hands in case of a power outage.

If you decide to bring your breast milk with you on an airplane:

Print the **TSA policy** on breast milk and carry it with you—just in case.

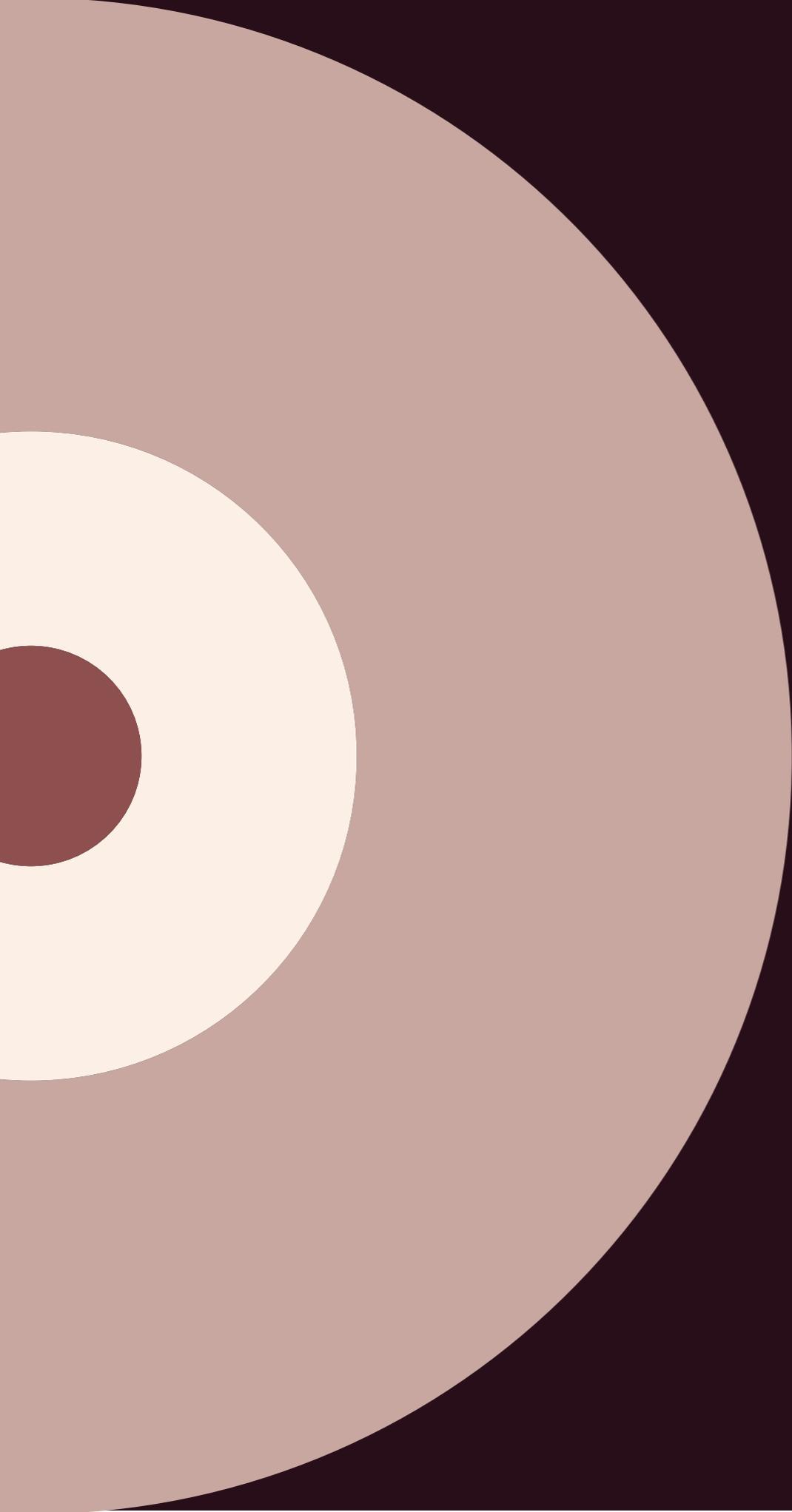
You are allowed to carry greater quantities of breast milk (or formula or juice for a child) than other liquids.

Carry your breast milk separate from other liquids and be sure to tell TSA that you have breast milk with you.

Frozen milk is subject to visual inspection. If you're carrying fresh or thawed milk, you may be asked to open the container or put a drop in another container for testing.

All of these strategies are designed to simplify your transition back to work for you and your little one. Remember: Figuring out a new routine takes time and support—go easy on yourself and trust that your family will adjust in time.

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