

Returning to Work and Breastfeeding

There is countless evidence to encourage us to continue breastfeeding as long as possible. Great importance placed on the first 6 months of the infant's life, however all 'lengths' of breastfeeding will benefit the health of you and your baby. The WHO actually promote breastfeed beyond 2yrs!

Breastfeeding at work benefits the employer as well, and with their support you can both benefit. Breastfeeding when returning to work, can seem overwhelming and you may even wonder 'how will I continue?'. With some prior planning and rhythms to guide you, you can achieve the balance of breastfeeding and working together. Here are some tips to help you prepare for this journey:

Questions to consider:

- Am I able to consider returning to work gradually?
- Are the carers of my child familiar with handling expressed breast milk?
- Does my workplace have a breastfeeding policy in place?
- Am I able to have lactation breaks?
- How will I provide milk for my baby while I'm at work? Will I go to my infant? Can someone bring him to me? Will I express milk while I'm at work?
- How many feeds will my baby need while I am at work?
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- Is there a room to use for expressing / breastfeeding?
- Can I keep my expressing equipment in a clean place?
- Is there a fridge to store EBM or do I need to bring my own cooler bag?
- How will I transport my milk home from work?
- Do I know any colleagues that returned to work while breastfeeding and can give me some insights?
- Have you contacted your employer to discuss my return to work date, my intentions to continue breastfeeding and the need for lactation/ expressing breaks.
- Have I got a pump and which do I choose? If you will be expressing regularly on a long term basis then an electric pump is recommended.

Preparing for work – the month leading up...

- Commence pumping at the end of regular breastfeeds to start collecting a supply to keep in the freezer in preparation. These will be small amounts of first, as you have provided a full breastfeed to your infant, but over time the amounts will increase.
When collecting these amounts, ensure they are the same temperature in the fridge before adding them together.
- Think about if you will have 'regular' times to express at work, and try implementing those times at home in the weeks leading up to work, to help your body recognise the rhythm of pumping.
- Ensure your expressed breast milk (EBM) is well labelled with date and times.

- Make up a bag/ esky that you can use to bring your expressing equipment to work in and keep your milk cool on your way home.
- Call your employer to confirm they are aware of your needs to continue breastfeeding, and ensure there is a fridge to store your milk and a private room to use for expressing or breastfeeding.
- Before you start expressing, take some deep breaths to refocus and gently massage your breasts to promote oxytocin.
- Keep a photo of your little one with you – this will help relax and remind you why your continuing this sometimes hard but always rewarding act of nourishing your infant.

As the times of expressing will usually be different to home routine, due to unforeseen work demands, sometimes you may develop lumps or red areas, with even mild engorgement. Aim to check your breasts daily, and use the warm shower or heat packs for 5 mins with breast massage to help clear these blocked ducts.

Qiara probiotics can be a helpful support for you during this time of transition and change. There is evidence to suggest they are effective at treating blocked ducts and mastitis. I would suggest having a box of these probiotics in your fridge for these occasions.

More information can be found at www.qiara.com.au