

## 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?
- Have I introduced a bottle to my baby and what bottles do I choose?
- 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 or at the start of the day when your supply is at its peak to start collecting a supply to keep in the freezer in preparation. These may be small amounts of first, as you have provided a full breastfeed to your infant, but over time the amounts should 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.

- Choose optimally shaped teats that encourage a deep latch and not replicating 'nipple feeding'. A 'triangle shaped' teat and not just a short protruding teat.
- Consider what bottles to use for storing and pumping breastmilk. Glass bottles are the safest for storing breastmilk to reduce plastic exposure when possible.
- Consider the type of pump you choose to use, ensuring the nipple fits the flange size appropriately, measure the nipples to be sure!

Kate Visser IBCLC at Milky Business has a free nipple measuring tool and sells flange inserts on her website to ensure the flanges are the best size for optimal pumping.

- 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.
- Discuss with your employer and ensure they are aware of your needs to continue breastfeeding and 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. Start with circles, around your areola and breast then also some breast compressions.
- 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 or due to unforeseen work demands, there is the risk of breast inflammation developing. Check your breasts daily for any changes to your 'normal'. Watch out for tenderness, redness on your breast, feeling unwell generally.

The new guidelines around mastitis and breast inflammation is – ice, gentle lymphatic massage from nipple to armpit, anti inflammatory and feed as normal (not extra pumping to 'drain' the breast) and of course lots of rest, nourishing foods and immune support.

Qiara probiotics can be a helpful support for you during this time of transition and change. There is evidence they are effective at treating breast inflammation 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](http://www.qiara.com.au)

Please seek support and we can arrange a consult if you would like more tailored support regarding returning to work and continuing your breastfeeding journey.

