

# Working and Breastfeeding: Making It Work

By Nancy Mohrbacher, IBCLC, Lactation Consultant, Ameda Breastfeeding Products  
Co-author of *Breastfeeding Made Simple* and *The Breastfeeding Answer Book*



## **QUESTION:** What should I think about before I go back to work?

**ANSWER:** First, think about your breastfeeding goals. The more mother's milk your baby gets, the better. But breastfeeding does not have to be all or nothing. Choices include:

- **Full breastfeeding.** This could mean keeping your baby near you at work or having your baby brought to you for feedings. Some mothers use reverse cycle nursing, which means breastfeeding often while at home and working during their baby's longest sleep stretch.
- **Pump milk at work** for all missed feedings.
- **Leave both pumped milk and formula** for missed feedings.
- **Leave formula** for missed feedings and breastfeed when together.

Second, think about finding a caregiver close to work rather than home. This can reduce travel time, time apart, and your need to pump.

## **QUESTION:** What do I need at work to pump and store my milk?

**ANSWER:** First, find a place where you can relax and have some privacy. Ask if your workplace has a lactation room. If not, ask about a private office, empty conference room, storage room, lounge, or bathroom. Even if there's no electrical outlet, some quality breast pumps can be battery powered.

If you'll be pumping, plan to get a quality breast pump. Keep in mind that formula costs \$1,000 to \$2,000 for the first year. A good pump saves far more money than it costs.

- Avoid used or borrowed personal pumps, which may be worn out and unsafe to share.

Going back to work after having a baby can take a lot of planning. Both working and caring for a baby are demanding, and many mothers rethink their priorities.



- For moms working 30-40+ hours per week, the best choice is usually an automatic double pump that provides at least 40-60 automatic suction-and-release cycles per minute. This may be a hospital-grade rental pump or a top-quality pump for purchase, like the **Ameda Purely Yours** breast pump.
- For moms working full time, using a manual pump or a motorized pump recommended for occasional use may result in a gradually decreasing milk supply.
- For moms working part-time and pumping once a day or less often, less expensive pumps may work well enough. But buy the best pump you can.

### **PLAN YOUR PUMPING TIME AT WORK.**

- Find a place to wash your hands before pumping.
- If double-pumping, allow 10-15 min. each time and 5 min. to wash your pump parts in hot, soapy water, and rinse.
- To cut down on clean-up time, buy extra pump parts. With enough sets, you can wash them all in the dishwasher when you get home at night.
- To figure out how many times you need to pump at work, divide the number of hours you're away from baby (include travel) by three. Some mothers do fine on less.

## PLAN FOR MILK STORAGE.

- If your milk is stored in a room that's 66-72 °F, (19-22 °C) it can stay uncooled for 6-10 hours.
- To cool your milk, you can use a pump cooler case, cooler bag or refrigerator.

For more on milk storage and handling, see our Answer sheet, "Handling and Storing Mother's Milk."

## QUESTION: "Should I pump and store milk before I return to work?"

**ANSWER:** Most mothers do. But keep in mind that once you're at work, the milk you pump one day can be left for your baby the next day. If you start pumping once a day about 3-4 weeks before going to work, you have time to practice with your pump and have a good reserve of milk.

## QUESTION: How much milk should I leave for my baby?

**ANSWER:** For the average amount of milk needed at a feeding, see the chart below.

- At about four or five weeks, most babies are up to the maximum 25-35 oz. (750-1050 mL) per day. After that, daily milk intake stays stable until six months.
- After six months, when solid foods are added, milk intake goes down.
- Don't be surprised if your baby takes more milk from the bottle than you pump in one pumping session. This may not mean your milk supply is low. The faster, more constant flow of the bottle causes some babies to take more milk than needed from the bottle.
- A slow-flow nipple can help prevent overfeeding and help baby feel full on less milk.
- If you're apart for 8 hours, plan on your baby needing about 10-12 oz. (300-360 mL). This is about one-third of baby's daily intake. If baby takes more, try to find out why.

## AVERAGE FEEDING

Baby's Age	Average Intake Per Feeding	Average Intake Per 24 Hours
First week (after Day 4)	1-2 oz. (30-60 mL)	10-20 oz. (300-600 mL)
1 to 3 weeks	2-3 oz. (60-90 mL)	15-25 oz. (450-750 mL)
1-6 months	3-5 oz. (90-150 mL)	25-35 oz. (750-1050mL)

## QUESTION: Once I'm back at work, how do I keep my milk supply steady?

### ANSWER:

#### BEFORE YOU RETURN TO WORK:

- Spend your time breastfeeding long and often. This sets a good milk supply. Wait until you're back at work to worry about bottles and schedules.
- Count the number of times you breastfeed in a day. This is your "magic number." Try to keep this daily number (breastfeedings plus pumpings) steady once back at work.



"FIND A PLACE WHERE YOU CAN RELAX AND HAVE SOME PRIVACY."

#### AFTER YOU RETURN TO WORK:

- **Remember: Drained breasts make milk faster. Full breasts make milk slower.** Every time your breasts feel full, your milk supply slows down. The more times each day you drain your breasts well, the more milk you make. Don't go too long (more than 8 hours, even at night) without breastfeeding or pumping.
- **Breastfeed lots when you're together.** If you can, breastfeed baby twice in the morning: once when you wake up and again just before you leave the baby. Breastfeed as soon as you see baby after work. If baby seems hungry just before you arrive, suggest the baby be given as little milk as possible.
- **Pump as often as you can at work.** When home, pumping after breastfeeding can help, too. If you can't pump a lot at work, make up for it by breastfeeding more at home.
- **Use a good breast pump.** An ineffective pump may not drain your breasts well.
- **Keep in mind that "this too shall pass."** Most mothers stop pumping at work sometime between their baby's ninth and twelfth months, as their baby takes more solid foods and other drinks and takes less of their milk.

*This is general information and does not replace the advice of your healthcare provider. If you have a problem you cannot solve quickly, seek help right away.*

*Every baby is different, and your baby may not be average. If in doubt, contact your physician or other healthcare provider.*