

Breastfeeding & Work

If you plan to breastfeed or pump once you return to work, it's never too early to start planning. Here's some things to do before meeting your baby.

STEP 1: PLAN



Think

In an ideal world, what will breastfeeding at work look like for you?
What will your hours be?
Will you work from home?

Schedule

Arrange a "return to work" meeting ahead of your return date. This gives you time to confirm any arrangements.

Read

Get to know your breastfeeding rights. Your employer must provide appropriate breaks and facilities.

Talk

Speak to your employer about your needs and their breastfeeding policy.

Find

Suggest a suitable area for breastfeeding or pumping and discuss with your employer.

Go with the flow

Breastfeeding may not always go as expected and each child's feeding patterns will change as they grow. Be kind to yourself if things don't go as you might have hoped. You got this!

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Returning to work? If you want to continue breastfeeding or expressing milk, here's what to expect from your employer when you return to work.



Support

Employers should *support your breastfeeding experience*. Indicate break timings and relevant logistics. If problems come up, ask HR or your union for help.

Space

Employers should *provide a clean and comfortable place* for you to breastfeed or pump. Ideally this area is quiet, private and temperature controlled especially if your baby is with you. You may also need access to power and a cool place to store pumped milk.

SAFE STORAGE GUIDE *for breastmilk*

At room temperature (below 25°C)
Up to 4 hours

In a cooler with ice packs
Up to 24 hours

In a fridge (below 4°C)
Up to 3 days

Safety

Employers should *create a healthy culture* where breastfeeding employees are not discriminated against or harassed. They should have a breastfeeding policy, offer suitable breaks, and be flexible with work arrangements.

Breastfeeding at Work *Real Stories*



"I pumped at work"

I went to work full time when my daughter turned 6 months, and I've been back for a bit over a month now. Being the start of winter, I was keen for her to continue receiving breastmilk, if possible, for as long as possible. So I pump twice a day and send what I pump to daycare for the following day. My employer is fully supportive of this and has set up a lovely parent room with comfortable chairs, a change table, a fridge and a sink. While I was nervous about what it would mean for our breastfeeding journey, so far it's had little impact. We still feed like usual when we're together. I hope it continues to be the case.

"I breastfed before and/or after work"

I went back to work a couple of days a week when my boy was 8 months old. I tried pumping on my break but it just didn't work for me and I found he would get frustrated that there wasn't as much milk as he wanted in the evening (didn't take a bottle). So I started doing an extra feed in the morning, wearing a bra that I knew was comfy even with very full boobs and wore breast pads and would just get home with lots of milk. I found he would just feed more regularly in the evening on those days and overall take the same amount of milk just spaced differently.

"I went to my child to breastfeed"

My daughter started at daycare at 8 months old. I would work from home and go into the daycare to feed her twice a day, as her solids uptake was slow. Around 10 months that slowed to once a day and around 13 months, I stopped feeding her at the daycare. I continue to breastfeed her before and after daycare, and she is 15 months now.



Breastfeeding at Work *Real Stories*

"My babies came to work with me"

I had to return to work full-time when my babies were under 12 weeks old, so all three of my children came to work with me until they were around six months. I had a low milk supply, so bringing my babies to work with me helped me continue to breastfeed and maintain my supply. It also saved my whanau money (as we did not have to pay for childcare). My employer was super supportive, we turned one of our office spaces into a little nursery, and our team all took turns looking after our little office babies. This was a first for my workplace (and we did lots of learning together). We all agreed that it brought our team closer and created a more caring and compassionate workplace. We were also all set up when my colleagues brought their babies to work with them – It really helped us see what was possible.

"Someone brought my child to me"

I went back to work when my first son was 7.5 months and my husband stayed home (plumber). He was able to work his hours around mine and brought our daughter to me on my lunchbreak. I would breastfeed before I left to work at 8am, 12pm and again when I got home about 4pm. I kept feeding on demand on weeknights and weekends. I feel so blessed that I could keep breastfeeding for so long, and I loved seeing my family during my work day. Never needed to pump or use a bottle.

"I worked from home"

I went back to work after 6 months but I negotiated working from home until bub was 12 months. I blocked out my calendar three times a day for 20 mins so I was 'free' to breastfeed my baby, but most of the time I just feed on demand. Sometimes I breastfeed for 30mins and keep working, or it could be a quick comfort feed for less than 5mins. We're still going and I love it so much.