

Breastfeeding Mothers Returning To Work or School: What You Should Know

Before Returning to the Work or School

- Communicate with your supervisor/ academic advisor before returning to work or school to let him/her know that you will be breastfeeding and may be expressing milk when you return.
- When scheduling your return back to work or school, consider discussing your transition plan and flexibility needs with your supervisor/academic advisor, or applying for formal flexible work arrangements (if applicable). You might want to begin mid-week or start off part-time; it can be overwhelming for a new mom to go back to work/school again, so if it's possible, try starting off slow.
- When arranging for child care, consider communicating with the provider about your infant's feeding needs, scheduling and preferences. If you need any help finding a child care provider or have any other concerns about child care and schooling, contact the School and Child Care Search Service offered by Columbia University at 212-851-9180.
- Introduce bottles to your baby around his/her fourth week so that he/she can become comfortable with being fed by a bottle. Babies who don't start using the bottle around the fourth week may reject a bottle at a later date.
- Six-weeks before returning to work/school, start expressing breast milk and establish your pattern of breast milk expression so it can make your transition to work/school easier.
- Have a supply of breast milk prepared before you return to work/school. Breast milk can be stored in a refrigerator for 4-8 hours, or you can freeze the milk for up to 3-4 months.
- You might want to consider purchasing a nursing bra for easier access when pumping/feeding, as well as support and coverage from breast milk leakage.
- Contact the Office of Work/Life for access to the lactation room at least ten days before returning to work/school, and for more details on the pump and attachments needed.

Equipment in Lactation Rooms

- Medela Symphony hospital-grade pumps are provided in each lactation room. For more information, please visit <http://www.medelabreastfeedingus.com/products/breast-pumps/223/symphony-breastpump>.
- In order to use the pumps provided in each room, you will need to purchase the necessary attachments. We recommend that you purchase the Medela Symphony Double Pumping Kit (<http://www.medelabreastfeedingus.com/products/pump-accessories/90/lactina-double-pumping-kit>). Contact the Office of Work/Life to purchase the kits below retail value, or you may choose to purchase them from a local retailer. You can find where to buy these accessories at: <http://medela.findlocation.com/>.
- If there are no coolers or refrigerators in the lactation room that you plan to use, you may want to bring a cooler with ice to store your milk. Please review the lactation room guidelines posted here for more information about each room: <http://worklife.columbia.edu/accessing-lactation-rooms>

See reverse side for more information 

When You Return to Work or School

- You should bring enough milk storage containers for the number of times that you wish to pump throughout the day.
- If you decide to store your breast milk in one of the rooms that provide refrigeration, please make sure to label your container to decrease the risk of contamination or swapping breast milk.
- Consider wearing “breast-feeding friendly” shirts/blouses that open from the front for easier access to pump your breasts.
- Bring an extra shirt/sweater/vest to wear just in case your breasts leak.
Tip: If you wear patterned clothing material, it will be harder to see any milk that leaks
- Some lactation rooms are set up to house more than one pump, in this case, there are curtains in place to keep your privacy.
- Bring a picture of your baby to hang up on the bulletin boards in each lactation room. Seeing pictures of babies will not only help stimulate the “let down reflex” and help your breasts pump better, it is also a great way to show off your baby to other mothers using the rooms.
- Being relaxed will also help you pump better. Read a magazine, listen to music, practice relaxation or breathing techniques.
- Bring some healthy snacks and water to work/school with you. Women who are breastfeeding need extra calories and proper hydration so having a handy snack and beverage will help.
- Make sure to lock the lactation room when you are using it so that you will not be bothered while pumping.
- Please contact the Office of Work/Life if you have further inquiries, concerns, or suggestions on how to make the lactation rooms as useful and enjoyable as possible.

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