

# Breastfeeding and Returning to Work or School

*You can continue breastfeeding!*



# Congratulations!

You have given your baby the best possible start in life by breastfeeding. In fact, nine out of ten women in California start out breastfeeding their infants and many of them continue after returning to work or school. You can too! This booklet is designed to help you do just that.

The longer you breastfeed, the fewer illnesses your child will have and the less work or school you will miss. Did you know your child's risk of developing obesity, diabetes, and other conditions is reduced with every additional month you breastfeed.

There are benefits for you too. You may burn up to 600 calories a day which can help you lose your pregnancy weight easier. Breastfeeding your baby decreases your risk for type 2 diabetes and breast cancer. You will be giving something to your infant that no one else can provide. Your milk is not just food, it is protection. You can't buy that in a can at the grocery store.



The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends women breastfeed their infants for at least one year.

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**“I’m glad I continued breastfeeding after returning to work. I love the closeness I have with my baby when I’m breastfeeding. I love having one thing that I can do for my baby that no one else can, especially considering I’m back at work and other people are helping take care of him.”**

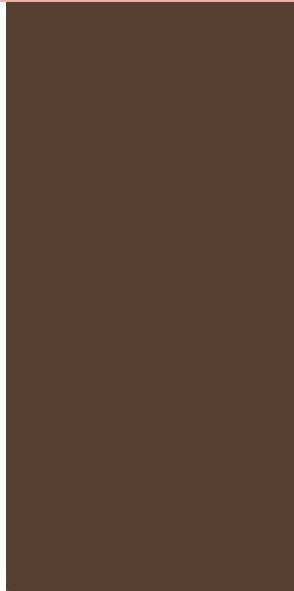
**—Elizabeth, WIC Mom**

# **Will working and breastfeeding work for me?**

Moms in almost every line of work are continuing to breastfeed, including:

- College and high school students
- Teachers
- Waitresses
- Retail workers
- Administrative staff
- Members of the Armed Forces
- Construction workers
- Sales and manufacturing workers
- Well-known celebrities

With a little planning, you too can successfully return to work or school and continue breastfeeding.



## **Will I need a breast pump?**

If you will be away from your baby long enough that you regularly miss one feeding or more, then you may need an electric breast pump.

## **Where can I get a breast pump?**

Breastfeeding moms who are returning to work or school and currently enrolled in WIC may be eligible for free breast pumps from the WIC office. Talk to the WIC staff for more information.



**“I never considered weaning because I was returning to work. It’s so easy to pump at work and it’s good to know that I’m taking care of my baby even while I’m away from her.”**

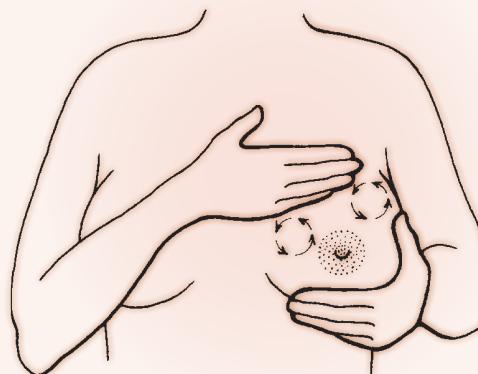
**—Kirsy, WIC Mom**

# How can I express my breastmilk by hand?

Every breastfeeding mom needs to learn to hand express her milk. Even if you have a pump, you never know when it might stop working or you may forget a part of the pump at home. Using hand expression along with pumping can also increase the amount of milk you are able to store for your baby.

## To hand express:

1. Wash your hands.
2. Use a clean container with a wide opening to collect your milk.
3. Place a warm washcloth on your breasts to help your milk flow.
4. Massage your breast to help increase the amount of milk you express.
  - Place one hand under your breast for support.
  - Apply gentle pressure, using a circular motion with your other hand.
  - Massage from several starting points, always working from the chest toward the nipple.



- Repeat on your other breast.
  - Gently shaking your breasts while leaning forward may also help to get your milk flowing.
5. Hold the clean container near your breast. With your other hand, place your fingers and thumb about one to two inches away from the base of your nipple.

PRESS IN toward your ribs, SQUEEZE gently into the center of your breast, then RELAX your hand, and REPEAT. The milk will not flow quickly at first but keep going and your milk should begin to drip.



Expressing your milk gets easier with practice. Don't be discouraged if you can only express a small amount in the first few days. If hand expression is not working for you, talk to the WIC staff. You may need a breast pump.

**View a hand expression video at**  
**<https://med.stanford.edu/newborns/professional-education/breastfeeding/hand-expressing-milk.html>**  
**or talk to the WIC staff.**

# What steps should I take before I return to work?

- Take as much time as you can for maternity leave. Talk to your boss or human resources department about your options. Learn more about California's leave programs at: <https://edd.ca.gov>.
- Some employees may be eligible for up to 12 weeks off and some may be eligible for cash benefits.
- Breastfeed often to build up a good milk supply.
- Begin pumping and storing your milk about two weeks before your start date. If you are going back to work full time, two weeks of pumping one time a day could give you enough milk stored in the freezer.

**Start expressing and storing your milk about two weeks before you go back to work.**



- Talk to your boss and work out a schedule so you can pump or breastfeed your baby during breaks at work. It is best to find a place and talk about your pumping needs before you have your baby.
- Have at least one practice run where you leave your baby with a caregiver who will feed your baby a bottle of breastmilk. Take this time to do something special for yourself: a nap, a movie, time with a friend or your spouse. Your baby may not easily take the bottle if you are in the same room.
- Ask your employer if you can start back to work part time at first, job-share with another employee, telecommute, or work from home. If your employer is open to it, ask if you can bring your baby to work.
- Start back to work in the middle of your work week. Having a short first week will help you and your baby adjust.

## Breastfeeding is good for business!

Your employer can experience up to a \$3 return for every \$1 invested in creating a supportive environment for breastfeeding employees. Studies show that employers that support breastfeeding have:

- Moms and dads miss work less often.
- Lower employee turnover.
- Increased productivity.
- Increased employee loyalty.
- Lower healthcare costs.

# **Do I have the right to express milk at work?**

California Labor Code Section 1030–1034 is a law that offers protections for all working moms so that they can continue to breastfeed even after they return to work.

- **Employers must provide:**

- A clean, private place, other than a bathroom to express breastmilk.
- Reasonable break time for you to express breastmilk each time you have the need. Most mothers will need to pump 2-3 times during the work day for 20–30 minutes.

- **For more information about your rights under the law, or to file a complaint, contact the California Department of Industrial Relations, Division of Labor Standards Enforcement.**

Visit [www.dir.ca.gov/dlse/HowToFileBOFEClaim.htm](http://www.dir.ca.gov/dlse/HowToFileBOFEClaim.htm).

Or, call the Legal Aid Society at 1-800-880-8047.



# **What is the best way to talk to my employer?**

Breastfeeding is a natural step in becoming a mother and very important for your baby. Some employers may not know much about it or may not be aware of the federal law that protects all breastfeeding employees. Have confidence in your decision as you speak to your boss. Here are some simple steps successful moms suggest:

1. Before talking to your employer or school, talk to your friends and family. Find out if they have any experience with breastfeeding and working and ask for their support.
2. Talk to your coworkers. You may find other mothers who have pumped at work before. Is anyone else pregnant or breastfeeding? If so, consider meeting with your boss to make arrangements together.
3. Talk to your human resources (HR) department if your employer has one. HR will know any policies or programs that may help you combine working and breastfeeding. They may also be able to help you to talk with your manager about scheduling breastfeeding breaks.
4. Schedule a meeting or write a letter or e-mail to your employer to discuss your return.
5. Before your meeting, practice what you plan to say with your friends or family. This will help you ease your nerves and be prepared.

6. At your meeting:
  - Explain why breastfeeding is important to you, your baby, and how it benefits companies as well.
  - Offer to come in early and stay late to make up for the time you need to pump.
  - Discuss your ideas about where you would pump and store your milk. Include how often you think you will need to pump. This will help your employer to plan for business needs.
  - Discuss any questions or concerns your employer has.
7. Encourage your employer to develop a policy supporting breastfeeding employees. For more information go to [www.cdpb.ca.gov/Programs/CFH/DMCAH/  
Breastfeeding/Pages/Lactation-Accommodation.aspx](http://www.cdpb.ca.gov/Programs/CFH/DMCAH/Breastfeeding/Pages/Lactation-Accommodation.aspx) and click on “For Employers”.

# What questions should I ask my employer?

## 1. What private space is available for expressing milk?

If a private space is not available, look for a space that you are willing to use. It doesn't have to be used only for pumping but it should be available anytime that you need to use it.

- **Use an office.**

If the door doesn't lock, hang a sign outside the door when you are pumping, or ask if your employer could have a lock installed for privacy.

- **Use a cubicle.**

Use a shower curtain rod or wooden dowel from a hardware store to hang a large curtain outside the cubicle when you need to pump.

- **Make a space.**

Room dividers, partitions, or even a pop-up tent can be used to make a quick pump room. Tip—use a radio or fan in this portable space if you are concerned about people hearing your pump.

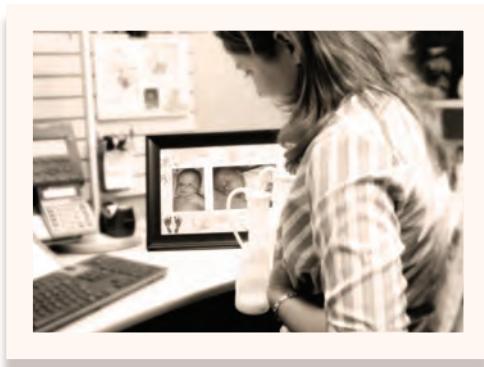
## 2. How should I arrange my schedule to pump at work?

- You will need to pump the same number of times that you are currently breastfeeding.
- Most moms will need to use their morning and afternoon break times and part of their lunch hour to express their milk.

- With a double electric pump, each pumping session will take about 15–20 minutes. You will also need time to get to and from the milk expression space and to wash your hands and equipment.
- If you need to use unpaid break time, talk to your employer to see if you can come early or stay late to make up the time.
- Ask if your baby can come have lunch with you. Because you can breastfeed and eat at the same time it will give you a chance to relax and not feel rushed on your break.

### **3. Where should I store my milk?**

- It is safe to store breastmilk in a shared staff refrigerator.
- If you will be using a shared staff refrigerator, store your milk containers in a brown paper bag or lunch box with your name on it.
- An insulated bag with ice packs can be used to store freshly expressed milk for up to 24 hours.





## What about child care?

- Find a child-care provider that is close to your work and supports breastfeeding.
- Visit your child-care center a few times. Touch toys and items in the center. Your milk will build up immunities to germs in the child-care center and pass that protection on to your baby.
- Take your baby to the child-care center to get your baby used to it.

# What tips can I share with my child-care provider?

- Your milk will separate and have a cream layer on top. They simply need to swirl the milk to mix it up.
- Breastmilk is considered a food and does not need special handling.
- Take a blanket, pillow case, or item of clothing with your scent on it to your baby's child-care center. They can place it between them and your baby for feedings. If your baby is having a hard time, your scent may help to calm him.
- The milk can be warmed by placing the bag or bottle in a cup of warm water for a few minutes.
- Breastfed babies usually eat smaller more frequent meals. Your baby will probably eat every 2–3 hours.
- Ask your child-care provider to learn more about supporting breastfeeding babies. For more information go to [www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CFH/DMCAH/Breastfeeding/  
Pages/Lactation-Accommodation-for-Child-Care-  
Workers.aspx](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CFH/DMCAH/Breastfeeding/Pages/Lactation-Accommodation-for-Child-Care-Workers.aspx).

# How do I store my milk?

- Put your breastmilk in clean bottles or breastmilk storage bags.
- Store about 2-5 ounces per bottle or bag for the first 6 months.
- Once your baby starts solid foods the amount that you will need to store for your baby may decrease.
- Label containers with the date pumped and the baby's name.
- Use the oldest milk first.
- At work or school, store breastmilk in a refrigerator. Use an insulated cooler bag with frozen ice packs for up to 24 hours when you are traveling.
- If your stored breastmilk smells sour, throw it out.
- Thaw breastmilk under running water that is gradually warmed, or in a bowl of warm water.

Never  
microwave  
breastmilk.



# Breastmilk storage guidelines for healthy full-term babies

Storage Locations and Temperatures			
Type of Breast Milk	Countertop 77°F (25°C) or colder (room temperature)	Refrigerator 40°F (4°C)	Freezer 0°F (-18°C) or colder
Freshly Expressed or Pumped	Up to <b>4 Hours</b>	Up to <b>4 Days</b>	Within <b>6 months</b> is best Up to <b>12 months</b> is acceptable
Thawed, Previously Frozen	<b>1-2 Hours</b>	Up to <b>1 Day</b> (24 hours)	Never refreeze human milk after it has been thawed
Leftover from a Feeding (baby did not finish the bottle)		Use within <b>2 hours</b> after the baby is finished feeding	

Centers for Disease Control, Storage and Preparation of Breast Milk, June 2019. <https://bit.ly/2dxVYLU>

# How do I keep up a good milk supply?

- Breastfeeding your baby is the best way to make more milk. The more often you breastfeed, the more milk you will make. Breastfeed often when you and your baby are together.
- Be sure to pump your milk at work as often as you would breastfeed your baby at home.
- Massage your breasts while pumping. This can increase your milk supply and the calorie content of your milk.
- Take good care of your breast pump. Read the pump instructions or watch the video so you know when to replace the valve or if you need to use a larger breast flange. Both of these things can affect your milk supply.
- Some moms will take a day or two off work to be with their baby and breastfeed often.  
This is a great way to increase milk supply.

**Breastfeed often when you and your baby are together.**





**“Pumping isn’t fun, but I do it because it’s best for my baby. It makes me feel like we’re still connected even though we’re not together.”**

**—Lauren, WIC Mom**

# **What do I do once I return to work or school?**

- Breastfeed your baby just before leaving for work and tell your child-care provider to feed your baby about 2 hours before you will be there so that you can breastfeed as soon as you pick him up.
- Don't wait till your breasts get full to pump. Express every 2-3 hours if your baby is 0-6 months and every 3-4 hours if your baby is 6 months or older. (see sample schedule)
- Relax—before pumping take a few deep breaths, think about your baby. Some women will bring a photo or a recording of their baby's coos to help them get their milk flowing.
- Your baby may want to breastfeed more often in the evening or whenever you are together. That is normal and will help you keep up your milk supply.
- As your baby gets older and starts solids he will need less breastmilk so you don't have to pump as often. By 10-12 months you may only need to pump once at work.
- Speak to your WIC counselor or lactation consultant right away if you have any problems or questions.
- Take one day at a time and be willing to try new ways to make breastfeeding a success. Be proud of all your efforts.

## 0–6 Months Sample Pumping Schedule

Before work 7 a.m.	Break 10 a.m.	Lunch 12:30 p.m.	Break 3 p.m.	After work 5:30 p.m.
Breastfeed	Pump	Pump	Pump	Breastfeed

## 6–12 Months Sample Pumping Schedule

Before work 7 a.m.	Lunch 11 a.m.	Break 3 p.m.	After work 5:30 p.m.
Breastfeed	Pump	Pump	Breastfeed

# How can I let the baby set the pace for bottle feeding?

Feeding is a great time to nurture a baby. When you feed a baby at a comfortable pace, baby can let you know, “I need a break” or “I’m full.” Letting a baby set the pace means less chance of overfeeding, gas, stomach discomfort, and spitting up.



1

## Is baby hungry?

Feed baby when you see hunger cues...

- Keeps hands near mouth
- Bends arms and legs toward body
- Makes sucking noises
- Puckers lips
- Searches for nipple (roots)



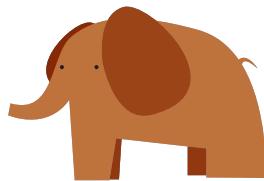


2

## Feed baby.

Here are 5 easy tips  
to feeding baby...

- Always hold a baby and the bottle when feeding.
- Hold baby almost upright.
- Brush the bottle nipple across baby's upper lip. Wait for baby's mouth to open.
- Hold the bottle in an almost flat position. The nipple will be only partly full. This keeps the milk from pouring into baby's mouth.
- Let baby pause and take breaks every few sucks. The baby will feed for about 15–20 minutes.



3

## Is baby full?

Don't try to get a baby to finish the bottle. Watch for fullness cues...

- Sucks slower or stops sucking
- Relaxes hands and arms
- Turns away from nipple
- Pushes away
- Falls asleep



**California Department of Public Health, California WIC program**

*This institution is an equal opportunity provider.*

**1-888-942-9675 | [MyFamily.WIC.ca.gov](http://MyFamily.WIC.ca.gov)**

Rev 11/21

*Photos and some content compliments of  
Texas Health and Human Services, Texas WIC program*