

Working and Breastfeeding --Checklist and Information--

Having a new baby is a major life change—whether it is your first child or you’ve done it before. While it is often daunting to imagine the demands of your job and the needs of your child, there are countless mothers who fit working and breastfeeding together in a way that meets the obligations of their employment and the needs of their child.

The University of Texas at Austin is supportive of you breastfeeding your young child. We know that your child will thrive physically and emotionally. Breastfed babies are sick less often so you will miss less work. Breastfeeding is good for the mother, the child, and even the employer.

Here are some tips to consider as you sort through the options for breastfeeding and working.

Things to consider	Yes/Done	No
Does your employer support your choice to breastfeed?	X	
Are breastfed babies sick less often so that you would miss less work time due to caring for a sick child?	X	
Talk to your supervisor about your desire to breastfeed upon your return to work and the need for consistent breaks and a private space to express milk. HealthPoint Work/Life Balance Program (471-3366) can help you plan this conversation if you would like. It might even be a good idea to inform your supervisor about the health benefits of breastfeeding and the likelihood that you would have fewer sick days due to a sick child.		
Is childcare available close to work so that you could potentially breastfeed over lunch?		
Identify the closest lactation/quiet rooms to your office and visit them while still pregnant. Arrange for access upon your return. Ensure that you will feel comfortable and that the room is clean. If the room is not clean, alert the room contact person.		
Consult with community organizations, your obstetrician, and friends who have breastfed while working to identify the type of breast pump you want and the supplies you will need. The University Health Services Pharmacy sales discounted breast pumps. Practice assembling, cleaning, and using the breast pump before you return to work.		
Identify a network of colleagues, friends, and family who will offer you support and advice as you return to work after childbirth.		
Do you have the option of not returning to work after your baby is born? If yes, is that an option that makes sense for you?		

Making Breastfeeding Work for You

Take breastfeeding classes/instruction. No, you're not supposed to just "know" how to do it!

Delay introducing a bottle until your baby is a breastfeeding whiz and your milk supply is well-established (usually 4-6 weeks). Have someone else (not you) introduce a bottle to your baby about two weeks before you return to work. Those infants older than three months that persist in resisting a bottle might accept milk from a cup or a spoon.

Plan to return to work following maternity leave on a Thursday and consider negotiating taking the next two Wednesdays off. That means you are not away from your infant for more than two days in a row and it gives you both time to adjust.

Work with your supervisor to schedule predictable breaks that allow you to express milk. Some women take longer than others to pump milk. If you need more time to relax, talk to your supervisor about a flexible schedule.

Wash your hands before you begin to express milk. Also remember to clean and sterilize your breast pump regularly.

You may wish to carry a cooler for your milk along with your breast pump. Again, talk to mothers who have worked and breastfed successfully. Don't reinvent the wheel. Use their experiences to guide your purchases and your plans.

Breastfeeding makes you hungry! Bring healthy snacks and drinks to work.

If you find the idea of returning to work full-time really difficult, consider negotiating a part-time return (if possible) or talking to your supervisor about job-sharing.

If your childcare situation is close by, you may choose to breastfeed your child over your lunch break.

If you are someone used to being 'in control', you may find the experience of being a breastfeeding mother a bit overwhelming. Take care of yourself. Ask friends for help. Drink plenty of fluids. Eat healthy. Allow the housekeeping to slide a bit—this is a time to take care of your baby and yourself.

Breastfeed your child without restriction throughout evenings, nights, weekends and days off. This will help to maintain your milk supply. If you and your baby are apart during the day, it is common for your baby to want to breastfeed more when you are together.

Try this as a 'sample day' for a breastfeeding mother:

- Prepare your outfit, meals, and diaper bag the night before. Set your alarm for a half hour before you need to get up and then have a leisurely breastfeeding session with your baby in bed.
- Breastfeed just before you leave your baby with their caregiver.
- Pump or breastfeed throughout the day.
- Breastfeed again when you pick up your baby at the caregiver's and spend the first half hour relaxing with your child when you first arrive home.
- Go to bed early! Rest. It's hard work making milk, working, and caring for a baby. Sleep is your friend!