Continuing to Breastfeed When Returning to Work/School

It’s not unusual to feel overwhelmed by the prospect of returning to work/school and continuing to breastfeed. Just like you devised a labor and delivery plan, outlining a breastfeeding plan for returning to work/school will maximize your success -- plan ahead at work and at home; get the support you need at work/school by registering with the UC Davis Breastfeeding Support Program; practice expressing, pumping and bottle-feeding; and, develop a ‘return to work checklist’.

Plan Ahead at Work:

*Talk with your supervisor* before you even begin Maternity Leave. Take as much leave time as you can and continue to talk with your supervisor after you return to work to evaluate what’s working, what’s not?

*Start back part-time or begin working on a short week* (e.g., Wednesday or Thursday). That way, your first week back at work doesn’t feel sooo long.

Plan Ahead at Home:

Four to six weeks prior to your return to work, start collecting one bottle of breast milk, per day. Set a total goal of 24-32 oz. to have on “reserve”. Leave your pump station set-up for pumping.

- Whenever your baby nurses one side, but not the other--pump that other side;
- If your baby takes a long nap, try to pump in the middle;
- Pump one side while the baby nurses the other;
- Pump one hour after baby goes to bed/after the first breastfeeding of the morning.

If you would like to mix two different pump collections, make sure that both milks are refrigerator level cold before combining and only combine milk pumped on the same day.

Keep track of your surplus milk supply – label each with date/time - use older milk first. On a conservative note, remember 5-4-3. That is, no longer than five hours on the counter, no longer than four days in the refrigerator, and no longer than three months in a fridge/freezer combo. Do not store milk on the door of the refrigerator or fridge/freezer combo – move the milk into the back section where it is coldest. Milk can be stored for up to 6 months in a chest freezer.

Make sure your childcare provider knows how to handle breast milk and [how to bottle-feed a breastfed baby](#). Breast milk is liquid gold. Talk with your provider about [how much milk your baby typically takes from a bottle](#). Store your milk in small quantities (e.g., 2 oz) and encourage your provider to utilize your milk efficiently so as to avoid wasting it. Bottle-feeding should mimic breastfeeding by pacing the timing, presentation, and volume of milk fed to a baby during a feeding.

Support makes a difference:

*Register with the UC Davis Breastfeeding Support Program:*
  
  **UC Davis Medical Center**
  Breastfeeding Support Groups are available at the UC Davis Medical Center on Thursdays from 10-12 in the Glassrock building, Room 7106;
  Lactation Consultants Cheryl Burstiner cheryl.burstiner@ucdmc.ucdavis.edu and, Debbie Albert deborah.albert@ucdmc.ucdavis.edu facilitate these group meetings.

  **UC Davis Campus**
  Information about Classes and Support Groups on and around the UC Davis campus may be found at [http://worklife-wellness.ucdavis.edu/breastfeedingsupport/](http://worklife-wellness.ucdavis.edu/breastfeedingsupport/);
  Lactation Consults may be arranged with Shirley German sagerman@ucdavis.edu.

Effective Pumping Tips
The quality and fit of the pump matters -- when possible, use a hospital-grade breast pump. Be sure the flange size fits. Your nipple should be comfortable in the nipple tunnel. If your nipple gets red and irritated during pumping, you probably need a larger flange. If too much of your breast gets pulled into the nipple tunnel, you need a smaller flange.

Pump both your breasts at the same time -- double stimulation not only saves time but also greatly increases prolactin, the hormone that stimulates milk production. As a result, you get more milk when expressing both breasts at the same time.

Try “power pumping” -- keep the collection kit hooked up to your pump and pump for approximately 3-5 minutes, 10-20 times per day. Every 4 hours put the collected milk in the refrigerator.

Add breast compression when pumping -- moms who compress during pumping get more milk. Make use of a hands-free pumping bra to allow compressing your breasts instead of holding the pump shields.

Watch the video: [http://newborns.stanford.edu/Breastfeeding/MaxProduction.html](http://newborns.stanford.edu/Breastfeeding/MaxProduction.html)

To encourage another letdown -- take a break during pumping to massage, stroke, and shake your breasts.

More frequent, short pumping sessions -- stimulate more milk production than fewer, longer sessions.

Stress and tension, as well as cool body temperature -- make pumping less productive and can inhibit the milk ejection reflex.

If your baby is having a growth spurt or you have been under a lot of stress -- an “at home vacation” might be very helpful. Use this time to do nothing but breastfeed your baby as often as possible and rest. The increased stimulation and extra rest will help to build your milk supply.

**Return to Work/School check-list**

- *Ideally*, a nursing mom who is away from her baby for 6-8 hours should plan to pump as often as she would feed her baby during that time, about 3 times. *Realistically*, that may amount to 2 times during her absence. Sometimes, moms can include one or more direct breastfeeding sessions by making arrangements with their caregivers to bring the baby to work, or, by going home/to daycare, during their breaks.

- Do your best to maintain your pumping time schedule. For some women, skipping a pumping time three days in a row can drastically reduce their milk supply. Regular pumping keeps your milk supply up. The more you pump, or feed, the more milk you will produce.

- Bring supplies for self-care -- extra bra pads, another shirt or a sweater. Even if you don’t typically leak, you might if you stretch/skip a pumping session. Extra bra pads and a change of shirt/sweater can come in handy. The color black and patterned designs are best at hiding accidental leaks.

- Bring boxes of quart and gallon size (sealable) plastic bags:
  - With ice, they can be used as makeshift freezer packs (if you forgot them at home), and they can also be ice packs for the relief of plugged ducts or an engorged breast.
  - Put the word “clean” on one bag, and “dirty” on the other. Use these bags depending upon the condition of your parts at the time. This will keep your pump bag clean.
  - Eat right, drink plenty of water, take your prenatal vitamins, and try to get the rest you need. Bring a snack and a drink to the lactation room, and do something that is RELAXING while you pump.

- Research supports that the more senses we stimulate during pumping, the more of our milk “lets down”.

- Bring an item of clothing/blanket of your baby’s; record your baby’s voice; bring a photo. All of this will help with the letdown of your milk, therefore the amount of milk you express.

- Your baby is the best pump. Nurse your baby whenever you are at home -- at night, in the morning, and on the weekends. Breastfeeding is a wonderful way to physically and emotionally reunite with your baby when you return home from work. A nursing marathon over the weekend is usually all a mom really needs to get a supply back up by Monday.

**STAY ABOVE THE OVERWHELM:**

Often the first week back at work marks the first time mothers have had considerable time away from their baby. They may be dealing with a new caretaker for the first time, and, find a desk full of work just waiting for them while they were out on maternity leave. Keep it real, Rome was not built in a day and you won’t get it back in order in a day either. Take each day, one day at a time and do the best you can with the resources that you have available.