

# The Impact of Employment on Breastfeeding Success

Many women attempt to combine employment and breastfeeding, and some enjoy remarkable success. Other meet with frustration and disappointment due to lack of support, lack of pumping facilities, lack of time, lack of energy, and eventually lack of breast milk.

While continued breastfeeding certainly is possible for employed women, it is by no means easy. But even women who face daunting obstacles, such as doctors, nurses, flight attendants, factory workers, waitresses, teachers, field hands, road flaggers, and performers have managed to find workable solutions. The best advice is simply to give it a try. Don't assume breastfeeding won't be possible under your particular circumstances.

## The Advantages of Continuing to Breastfeed during Employment

- Improved infant health.
- Fewer work absences due to infant illness.
- Improved personal health and well-being.
- Feeling more connected to your baby during the workday.
- Periodic breaks that restore your perspective.
- The opportunity to nurse your baby when you are together.

## Helpful Hints for Employed Breastfeeding Mothers

- Plan your first day back to work mid-week. Then you only have 2-3 days to work before the weekend, which will allow you to re-group.
- Wear clothing that is convenient for pumping, such as blouses that open in the front and pull up. Plan ahead for leaking! Avoid silk, it stains. Prints hide leaking better. Have a jacket or over shirt you can put on, if necessary. Bring extra nursing pads.
- Drink plenty of extra fluids while at work – it's easy to forget. Keep a sports bottle or thermos/mug with you.
- Set your alarm a half hour earlier each morning to enjoy a leisurely nursing session before your hectic pace begins. Then your baby will be happy while you finish getting ready.
- Communicate with your baby-sitter so your infant is ready to nurse as soon as your arrive home. A wonderful let-down time at the end of the day for both of you!
- Keep your focus on the nursing relationship, not the volume of milk you are able to produce.
- Attempt to breastfeed exclusively on weekends and days off to build up your milk supply and to restore the nursing relationship.

- Reverse-cycle nursing works for some. That is you are nursing more in the evenings and at night when you are available to you baby.
- Definitely do a trial run for 1-2 days within a week or so before returning to work. Ask the baby-sitter to work with you on this. Write down the time it takes to nurse, get ready, pack up, drive to baby-sitters, etc. Then you'll know what time to get up for the day. Preparing as much as you can the night before may eliminate some of the busy morning stress.

## **Preparation for Returning to Work While Breastfeeding**

- Focus on the Optimal Initiation of Breastfeeding
  - Attend prenatal breastfeeding class with your partner
  - Use your brief hospital stay to optimize your early breastfeeding experiences to prepare for nursing your baby successfully at home. Ask your nurses for help – they know how to help with all the basics. Ask to see a Lactation Consultant for a discharge plan of action if you are experiencing difficulties with Breastfeeding.
  - Obtain electric pump kit while in the hospital. (Your nurse can get this for you.) It will be a charge on your hospital bill, but most insurance plans will pick it up of on hospital charge.
  - Plan to feed your infant on demand if hunger cues, and throughout the night, and avoid giving your baby a pacifier for at least the first several weeks.
  - Early follow-up after discharge should be your next strategy to assure the best possible start breastfeeding during the early weeks at home. Request that your baby be seen within 2-3 days after discharge and, if you are having any problems, seek further help from Lactation Consultant.
  
- Delay Your Return to Work for as Long as Possible
  - Will your employer be flexible to work with you on a temporary arrangement? Don't be afraid to ask.
  
- Become familiar with milk expression, and practice for Dad to help with a feeding.
  - 3-4 weeks is soon enough to start storing and introducing a bottle to the baby.
  - Choose a time you will not be rushed.
  - Baby should not be starving!
  - Be patient, it is a new skill for baby.
  - Baby may more readily take bottle from another caregiver, like Dad, a grandmother or a friend.
  
- Begin Collecting and Freezing Excess Milk before Returning to Work.
  
- Child Care Arrangements
  
- Workplace Facilities and Scheduled Breaks
  
- Enlist Support for Your Breastfeeding Plan

## **Range of Options for Breastfeeding and Working**

- Nurse baby at work site
- Go to baby at breaks
- Work Part-time
- Pump and save
- Pump and dump
- Don't pump – will need to wean work-time feedings. Start at least two weeks before returning to work.

## **Common Problems Experienced by Employed Breastfeeding Mothers**

- **Fatigue and Discouragement**

New motherhood is challenging whether or not you breastfeed and whether or not you work outside the home. It's easy to slip into overload with the responsibilities. It's o.k. not to be Superwoman! Try not to over-commit. Get help from friends/family. Hire someone for chores, if possible. It's o.k. to lower your standards for a while, turn off the TV, and go to bed earlier. This is a brief moment in time compared to the rest of your life and the life of your child, but so important!
- **Decreased Milk Supply**

Maintaining is easier than trying to increase, so the frequency of nursing/pumping for the 6-12 weeks is really important. If the baby is sleeping more than six hours at night, consider a pumping session either right before your retire, or once in the middle of the night.
- **Inhibited Milk Ejection Reflex**

Privacy, security of pumping area, attitude of co-workers, and time constraints may interfere with your relaxation. Look at picture of your baby; bring a baby item with your infant's scent, tape recording of your baby's sounds, or relaxing music to help.
- **Plugged Milk Ducts**

Irregular pumping schedule contributes to this, not well drained. Use warm compresses, massage and pump/nurse. Stop to do one-sided pumping for a couple of minutes, so that you can massage while pumping.
- **Mastitis**

The most common predisposing factor for mastitis is incomplete or infrequent breast emptying. Can cause fever, pain, redness. You will need prescription if you have mastitis.
- **Baby Loses Interest in Nursing**

Allow baby to cluster feed when he is with you, for a few days. This will help milk supply, if decreased. Nurse when she/he is sleepy. Cuddle a lot, skin to skin. Take baths together, relaxing.

## How Much Milk to Express/Prepare?

The average breastfed baby usually consumes between 2-4 ounces per feeding, 8-12 times per day, so that is a good amount to store in a bottle. All the bottles don't necessarily have to have the same amount in them. Also, it is much quicker to thaw two 3 oz. bottles than one 6 oz. bottle. If a baby is a little more hungry than usual, then it's easy to just pull out another small bottle to thaw.

### Average intake by weight:

8lbs 21.3 oz per day

9 lbs. 24.0 oz per day

10 lbs. 26.7 oz. per day

11 lbs. 29.3 oz. per day

12 lbs. 32.0 oz. per day

13 lbs. 34.7 oz. per day

14 lbs. 37.3 oz. per day

15 lbs. 40.0 oz. per day

16 lbs. 42.7 oz. per day

If you'd like to continue this, take a baby's weight in pounds and multiply by 2.67. That gives you average number of ounces per day. Then take the total ounces and divide by the daily feedings to find out how much to put in a bottle. For example, your baby weighs 13 pounds. That means he needs about 35 ounces per day. If he eats approximately 8 times per day, then he consumes a little over 4 oz. per feeding. If he eats more often, then he is probably used to smaller feedings. These are just averages, and babies may be more hungry at one feeding than another.

Babies can drink breast milk cold and many don't care at all what the temperature is. I think it's a good idea to take the chill off of it, but it doesn't necessarily have to be heated. Put the bottle in a pan of warm water or under running warm water for several minutes. Microwaves should never be used for this purpose. Babies (and parents) have been burned, and nutrients are destroyed by the high heat.