

# Go Back to Work and Continue to Breastfeed? Yes, You Can!

## Start Planning Now

Ask any mother working outside the home: Juggling family and job responsibilities is a daily balancing act. Mothers with brand new babies face even greater challenges. The longer you are able to stay home the better. However if you are getting ready to return to work shortly after the birth of your baby, you might be concerned about how to continue to breastfeed. Don't worry. With some advance planning, it is possible to successfully combine work and breastfeeding.

### Why Continue to Breastfeed?

Health authorities such as the Surgeon General and the American Academy of Pediatrics agree that breastmilk offers superior infant nutrition. In addition, breastfed babies have significantly fewer respiratory-tract and ear infections than bottle-fed babies. Breastfeeding reduces an infant's risk of food allergy, and initial research suggests that breastfeeding may have a long-term positive effect on baby's immune system.

For mothers, breastfeeding helps the uterus return to its pre-pregnancy state more quickly and decreases the risk of pre-menopausal breast cancer, ovarian cancer and osteoporosis. And with no formula or vitamin costs, breastfeeding is more convenient and less expensive than bottle feeding.

### How Will You Combine Breastfeeding with Working?

#### Create Employer Awareness

Fortunately, more and more employers are realizing the critical role women play in the work force and are taking steps to make it easier for them to return to the job and continue to breastfeed.

Some progressive employers institute company-sponsored support for breastfeeding mothers. For example, a Corporate Lactation Program can include prenatal education and postnatal counseling provided by an on-site lactation professional, as well as time, space and equipment for women to pump their breastmilk at work. Other companies may not have a full program, but will allow women to take the time they need during the day to pump their breastmilk.

Talk with your employer or ask them to call Medela before your baby is born. You may want to extend your maternity leave, work part-time for a period, job share,



or work at home part of each day or week. If your company does not have a Lactation Program, now may be the time to investigate starting one. In lieu of a formal program, however, try to make your own arrangements.

Explain to your employer the health benefits of breastfeeding for your baby. When baby is sick, mother often must be absent from work. The prospect of less absenteeism among breastfeeding mothers is a bonus for cost-conscious employers.

#### Select a Caregiver

Choosing the person who will care for your baby while you are at work is an important decision. You will want to select someone who supports your commitment to breastfeeding. Don't wait until the last minute to start investigating your choices. You will need to find a primary person as well as several back-ups—just in case.

Give your caregiver explicit written instructions on how to store breastmilk. Explain that, if possible, your baby should not be fed within a couple hours of your return. That way, he or she will be ready to breastfeed as soon as you arrive at the caregiver's after work. If baby is hungry before you arrive, the caregiver should tide him or her over with some water or a snack-sized portion of stored breastmilk.

### Helpful Hints for Breastfeeding

- Take full advantage of your maternity leave to establish a good supply of milk before going back to work.