



Mother's Information

Your Breastfed Infant in the Childcare Setting

Returning to work while you continue to breastfeed provides a bond to your child while you are at work. Your baby will benefit if he or she can also build a close relationship with other people in his or her life.

- ♥ Allow plenty of time to interview potential providers. Consider starting the process while you are pregnant or as soon as you know you will be returning to work.
- ♥ You may have family members or friends help with childcare or you may choose a childcare center, a home day care, sharing childcare with a friend or a combination of these.
- ♥ Remember, many in-home providers and childcare centers have waiting lists and some are nine months to a year long, so it makes sense to start looking soon as possible.

Choosing a childcare provider

A breastfeeding-friendly childcare provider:

- ♥ Is knowledgeable about breastfeeding or is willing to learn
- ♥ Has a license to provide infant and childcare.
- ♥ Provides a safe and clean place for your baby.
- ♥ Has a maximum ratio of infants to staff of four to one.
- ♥ Has an infant room with a rocking chair, cribs and other appropriate infant equipment and supplies.
- ♥ Encourages your visits to breastfeed and play with your baby.
- ♥ Has an area where you are comfortable breastfeeding.
- ♥ Has trained staff who have experience with infant care and who are nurturing and attentive to children in their care.
- ♥ Shares your belief that you can continue to breastfeed after you return to work.
- ♥ Has a refrigerator and a freezer for properly storing breastmilk and warm water for warming or defrosting breastmilk.
- ♥ Is a short distance from work so you can leave work to nurse your baby.

Trust

You must be able to completely trust your care provider. If you feel uncomfortable about leaving your baby with the person you've selected, drop in unannounced a few times. If you sense anything wrong at any time, take your baby and leave – you will need to find another care provider. This applies even to friends and relatives.

Expressing milk

Starting about two weeks before your return to work, express some breastmilk at least once a day and save it for your childcare provider to give to your baby. You can have a family member practice giving a bottle a few times before your first day. All you really need is enough milk for the first day, as you will pump the next day's milk while you are at work or school. However, having a little extra milk in the freezer can provide some peace of mind. Pumping on days off can also provide some extra milk.

See the handout “Pumps and Milk Supply” for much more information on expressing your milk. The handouts for childcare providers include information on storing and heating human milk, as well as tips on bottle feeding the breastfed baby.

Practice child care visits

Practice visits help your baby become used to the childcare provider and the new setting. They allow you time to practice getting yourself and your baby ready as if you were going to work. The practice visits could be once a week for a week or two, or for one feeding per day for a few days before you return to work.

Feeding Times

Tell your care provider the times when your baby usually eats, but make it clear that they should feed your baby when she shows hunger cues, rather than on a schedule. Let your care provider know they should limit feedings late in the day so that you can nurse your baby as soon as you arrive from work. Nursing as soon as you are together is a great way to connect at the end of the day, and also helps you to keep up a good milk supply.

Growth Spurts

Growth spurts usually occur around two weeks, six weeks, three months and six months. During a growth spurt, your baby may be fussy and want to nurse longer or more frequently, or may take more bottles during the day. Fussiness associated with growth spurts usually only lasts a day or two. Try to meet your baby's increased needs with extra nursing sessions as much as possible. However, if your care provider needs to give extra bottles during the day, be sure they let you know so that you can adjust your pumping schedule. You may be able to fit in one extra session during the workday, or in the evening once you return home.

Other comforts

When your baby is away from you, it may be helpful to provide comforts to help him or her feel safe and secure. If your baby has a comfort object, such as a stuffed animal or special blanket, leave it with him while you are away. Other things that may help provide comfort include:

- ♥ A piece of clothing with your scent—babies have a good sense of smell.
- ♥ A tape recording of your voice singing lullabies or reading.
- ♥ Windup musical toys or mobiles from home.
- ♥ Let the child care provider know how you hold your baby during feedings. This may help your baby relax.
- ♥ Extra carrying and holding time – offer your care provider a sling or other infant carrier that you use at home with your baby. Carrying and holding your baby will help her feel safe and secure as she adjusts to her new environment.

Fussy Evenings

Sometimes after a baby starts childcare, they will seem unusually fussy and clingy at home. Remember that they've been in a new situation all day, unsure of how to act and leaning to respond to a new care provider. Your baby may just need to vent a little about her day. This fussing doesn't mean your baby is “angry” with you for going to work. Holding and cuddling your baby at the end of the day reassures him that mommy will always be there for him, even when he's fussing. By providing this reassurance, you can smooth the transition to childcare.