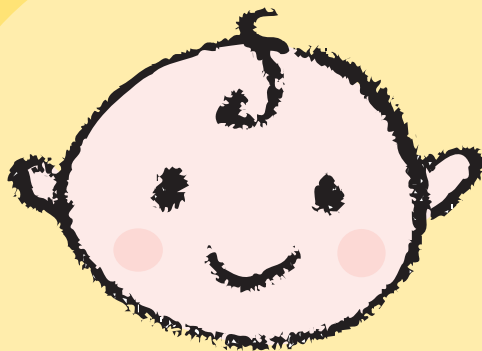


Breastfeeding and returning to work

Revised
2016



Information for pregnant
women and new mothers

We are happy to consider requests
for other languages or formats.
Please contact 0131 314 5300 or email
nhs.healthscotland-alternativeformats@nhs.net

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For the sake of consistency we have used 'he' or 'him' throughout the booklet.



Introduction

This booklet has been written for pregnant women and mothers who are thinking about combining working / studying and breastfeeding. If you want to breastfeed, don't let the fact that you are returning to work put you off. This booklet might also be useful for employers who are supporting mothers who are breastfeeding to return to work.

Many mothers continue to breastfeed on their return to work. It's a way of keeping that special bond you have developed with your baby. It also helps to continue the benefits of breastfeeding for you and your baby (see page 15 for health benefits) and can help maintain a good milk supply. The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends that babies are breastfed exclusively for around six months, and there are benefits from continuing this for two years and beyond.



‘I am so glad I did it.
It is a great bond.’
Lesley

Do I have a legal right to breastfeed at work?

In the UK, breastfeeding mothers have some legal protection under health and safety and sex discrimination laws. Employers have legal obligations to provide:

- Health and safety protection
- Flexible working hours
- Rest facilities
- Protection from harassment and indirect sex discrimination

You should let your employer know in writing before returning to work that you are going to continue to breastfeed.

For more information see pages 16–17.





What are my options for continuing to breastfeed when I return to work?

There are several options you can consider to help you continue breastfeeding when you return to work. Everyone has different circumstances, for example the age of your baby, your working hours and childcare arrangements, and what will work for one mother may not work for another. It is a good idea to think about what might work for you.

You may find it helpful to discuss returning to work and breastfeeding with other women who have done it. This might be particularly helpful if you are concerned about how your employer and colleagues might support you to breastfeed or express at work. If you don't know anyone in this situation, your local breastfeeding support group may be a good source of contacts. Ask your health visitor for advice.

Giving your baby breast milk only

A. Working flexible hours

You could talk to your employer about working flexible hours and arrange to work around your breastfeeding times, or you could negotiate shorter working hours temporarily until your baby feeds less often during the day.

See the legal rights section on page 17 for more information on flexible working.

‘The nursery is only just across the road. It’s nice to see her and it’s really much more pleasurable to feed her than express.’

Maria



B. Expressing milk for your baby to be given by his carer when you are at work

Expressing your milk means removing it from your breasts so that it can be given by someone else, usually in a free-flow cup or a bottle. Depending on your working hours, you may need to express your milk at work, so that you have milk to leave for your baby for the following day. If you choose to reduce the number of feeds, it may help to do this gradually in advance of going back to work. The breasts adapt, potentially lessening the need to express to prevent them being overfull.

You can use hand expression or a pump (or both) to express milk. How often you need to express will depend on how much milk your baby needs and how often he feeds. Many mothers become very skilled at expressing milk, the more they do it, and find that it can be done quite quickly.

See the expressing and storing section on pages 10–11 for more information.

C. Using nearby childcare

You may be able to arrange childcare near your workplace so that you can breastfeed your baby during work breaks, or immediately before or after work. If you feel that expressing at work is not for you, this may be an option. It will help if you can find childcare that supports you in continuing to breastfeed. Alternatively your employer may have a crèche. In some areas childcare establishments have received training from NHS staff to help them offer breastfeeding families a supportive environment.

If your baby is looked after by someone else while you are at work, e.g. a partner, grandparent or childminder, you may be able to arrange for them to bring him to you at work to be fed during work breaks.



‘I was working full-time before, but I wanted to return part-time, four mornings a week, from 9 till 1 o’clock. This meant I could feed Emma at the nursery when I left her and feed her again when I picked her up.’
Julie



How to express and store breast milk at work

'I take two breaks of about 20 minutes each day at work to express milk for her to drink the following day. As I work three days a week, this keeps my supply up so that I can still feed her myself on the days I am at home.'

Alison

Combining breastfeeding and formula feeding

You can breastfeed your baby when you are together, and his carer could feed him formula when you are at work. Most mothers who try this find that, once breastfeeding is well established, their breasts quickly adapt. They continue to breastfeed when they are not at work.

Expressing milk at work

You can express your milk by hand, or with either a hand pump or an electric pump. You can buy pumps from baby shops, pharmacies and online. Ask other mothers or your health visitor for opinions on which pumps are good.

Electric pumps can run on batteries or off the mains and can be bought or hired. It is a good idea to get your pump a few weeks before returning to work, to allow you to practise using and cleaning it. It will also give you an idea of how long each pumping session is likely to take. Some mothers find it helpful to express and freeze some milk to have on hand when they start working. See page 11 for information on storing breast milk.

It is good to introduce your baby to a bottle or a free-flow cup once breastfeeding is established so that he will take it when you leave him. If he refuses, someone else may have more success in giving it to him as he connects you with breastfeeding, not cups or bottles. Try different teats or warming the teat up. You could also try a soft-spouted beaker.



Facilities needed for expressing at work

These are ideal conditions, which may not be easy to meet in all workplaces. A creative and flexible approach may be needed.

- A clean, warm room with a low, comfortable chair. If the door cannot be locked you can put a sign on it to ensure privacy. You may want to discuss with your employer which room you could use, such as the First Aid room. The toilet is not a suitable place.
- An electric point for an electric pump if necessary.
- Handwashing facilities nearby.
- A hygienic area where you can clean your pump and store your sterilising equipment, if needed.
- A fridge for storing breast milk. The fridge should be a dedicated fridge for breast milk (where available). If this is difficult, a well-insulated cool bag is an alternative.

'I went back full-time when Ciaran was 5½ months. I had three breaks for expressing, at about 11 o'clock, at lunchtime and in the afternoon. In the morning, I was always very full and I would express from both sides at once. It took about 20 to 30 minutes. The other times I just expressed one breast, so that took 10 to 15 minutes.'

Heather

Storing breast milk

Expressed milk can be kept in the main part of the fridge (not in the door) for up to five days at 0–4 degrees Celsius. If there isn't a fridge available at work, you can store your breast milk in a cool bag until you get home and can put it in the fridge. You can freeze breast milk in a freezer below -18 degrees Celsius for up to six months. For further information on storing breast milk, see your *Ready Steady Baby!* book or the website: www.readysteadybaby.org.uk



Tips for expressing and returning to work

- It is often quite helpful initially to have a picture of your baby to look at when you are expressing, for example on your mobile phone. This may help the milk to flow.
- It might be a good idea to have an extra top/blouse at work in the early days.
- Label and date your breast milk before putting it in the fridge or freezer.
- Freeze breast milk in small amounts, so that there is no waste if your baby just needs a small quantity.
- Have a trial run with childcare arrangements before actually returning to work.

'I have four other children so I have to be quite organised in the morning to get to work on time. I started expressing with my lever-style hand pump when Joshua was about 12 to 16 weeks old so that I could build up a supply of milk in the freezer.'

Tracey



You, your employer and breastfeeding

When should I let my employer know?

It is important that you start the discussions on breastfeeding and returning to work with your employer as early as possible. In addition to the formal notification to your employer, you may want to discuss this with your line manager prior to returning to work. It is a good idea to take this booklet and the organisation's breastfeeding at work policy with you.

In most cases, it is possible to make suitable arrangements. It is important that your employer understands the current legislation. Links to more information about the key legislation that protects your right to breastfeed when you have returned to work can be found on page 17.

'My employer was really flexible and supportive. She had breastfed her own baby.'

Karen

Benefits to employers of supporting a breastfeeding mother

There are significant benefits to your employer from supporting women who wish to breastfeed on returning to work.

These benefits include the following:

- Reduced parental absence – women who continue to breastfeed after returning to work miss less time off work because of baby-related illnesses, and are off work for a shorter time when they do. See health benefits opposite.
- Higher rate of return to work of valued employees.
- Increased staff morale and loyalty.
- Lower recruitment and training costs.
- Recruitment incentive to attract new staff.

‘My boss was very positive. His wife had breastfed and he said he would support me and give me the breaks I needed for expressing. I wouldn’t have gone back as early if I hadn’t had all this support. The department was short staffed at the time so my boss was keen to get me back.’

Heather

Health benefits for the baby

Babies who are breastfed have a reduced risk of:

- gastrointestinal infections (vomiting and diarrhoea)
- chest infections
- acute ear infections
- developing diabetes in childhood
- obesity in the longer term.

Health benefits for the mother

Mothers who breastfeed have a reduced risk of:

- ovarian cancer
- breast cancer

For further information visit www.feedgoodfactor.org.uk



How your employer can help

- By giving breaks for breastfeeding mothers to express milk.
- By finding a room where an employee can express milk (not the toilet).
- By being flexible about working hours.

Your employer may already have a policy to support breastfeeding mothers at work. Ask to see it before you start your maternity leave.



Your legal rights explained

This page provides you with links to information about protecting your right to breastfeed when you have returned to work.

Continuing to breastfeed when you return to work

This guide includes information on your legal rights and how to negotiate with your employer.

<http://www.maternityaction.org.uk/advice-2/mums-dads-scenarios/6-breastfeeding-rights/continuing-to-breastfeed-when-you-return-to-work/>

Advice line: 0845 600 8533

The Health and Safety Executive

This site helps employers and employees understand their responsibilities and what they need to do to comply with the law.

www.hse.gov.uk/mothers

Reporting concerns: www.hse.gov.uk/contact/concerns.htm



Further support and information

Support

A health visitor or midwife can advise you on options for returning to work and continuing to breastfeed, and put you in touch with local breastfeeding support groups.

Breastfeeding voluntary organisations have trained supporters who are mothers who have breastfed. They offer information and support by telephone:

National Breastfeeding Helpline	Tel: 0300 100 0212
The Breastfeeding Network	Tel: 0300 100 0210
La Leche League	Tel: 0845 120 2918
National Childbirth Trust	Tel: 0300 330 0700

Scottish Centre for Healthy Working Lives Adviceline: Free and confidential help and information on any matter concerning health, safety and wellbeing in the workplace.

Tel: 0800 019 2211 (calls are now free from mobiles)

www.healthyworkinglives.com

Feedgood Factor

Scottish national breastfeeding website. Offers useful advice as well as links to other resources and support services for pregnant women and new mothers.

www.feedgoodfactor.org.uk

The Breastfeeding etc. (Scotland) Act 2005 makes it an offence to prevent or stop a child from being fed milk in a public place.



Information

Off to a good start (NHS Health Scotland) –
available from your midwife/health visitor
www.healthscotland.com/documents/120.aspx

Ready Steady Baby! (NHS Health Scotland)
www.readysteadybaby.org.uk

New and Expectant Mothers at Work: A guide for Employers
(Health and Safety Executive, 2013)
www.hse.gov.uk/mothers/
www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg373.pdf

Fun First Foods: An easy guide to introducing solid foods
(NHS Health Scotland, revised 2012)
www.healthscotland.com/documents/303.aspx

Accommodating breastfeeding employees in the workplace
(ACAS, 2013) www.acas.org.uk

www.dwp.gov.uk – for information on state benefits

www.direct.gov.uk – for information on employment benefits

www.healthyworkinglives.com – for information on occupational health and safety in the workplace

Ready Steady Baby! goes **mobile**



Ready Steady Baby! is now available as a free smartphone app. So it's even easier for you and your partner to find out about pregnancy, birth and early parenthood from the NHS.

Go to www.readysteadybaby.org.uk to find out more.



www.readysteadybaby.org.uk



