

Breastfeeding and Child Care

After the birth of a baby many mothers must make plans to return to work or school. Most mothers wonder if they can continue to breastfeed, and the answer is yes!

Why breastfeed?

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that infants breastfeed exclusively for the first six months of life and through the first 12 months while solids are introduced. Breastfed babies have less colic and fewer illnesses the first year of life. They have a reduced risk for allergies and a lower incidence of gastrointestinal and respiratory diseases and fewer ear infections. Breastfeeding your baby provides the emotional benefit of feeling close through physical contact while providing nutrition in a way nothing else can.

Plan for child care

Choose a provider who is supportive of your plans to breastfeed and welcomes breastfed children at the child care site. Is there a quiet, private place to nurse? Are other children receiving breastmilk in child care? If your child care is near work or school you may consider breastfeeding right before work, at lunch, and right after work. Make sure the provider knows, or is willing to learn, how to handle breastmilk safely.

Pumping and storing breastmilk

Begin to pump and store breastmilk for child care at home before returning to work. Breastmilk should be stored in clean, ready to feed, unbreakable containers. The containers should be labeled with the child's name and date collected and the date thawed (if previously frozen). Once at child care it should be promptly refrigerated, and used *on the day it is brought into the program*. Breastmilk can be stored in a freezer that has a separate door from the refrigerator at 0 degrees Fahrenheit for up to three months. Breastmilk that is frozen and then

thawed should be used within 24 hours and cannot be refrozen. Fresh breastmilk can be stored in a refrigerator for 48 hours.

Seek help as needed

There are many resources for the breastfeeding mother who is returning to school or work. Consider calling your pediatrician's office, and ask whether they can refer you to a lactation consultant. The hospital where your baby was born may also offer support for breastfeeding mothers.

Prepare your baby before starting child care

This means your baby should be able to feed successfully from a bottle. Introduce a bottle when baby is 3 to 4 weeks old, after breastfeeding is established, and at least a few weeks before returning to work. The first time bottle feeding is attempted make sure it is a calm, unrushed time for you, and a time when the baby is hungry, but not frantic.

These first attempts at bottle feeding may be more successful, and less confusing to the baby, if the baby's father, mother's partner, or another trusted adult offers the bottle. Slowly introduce the nipple and offer the baby reassurance. Stop if the baby becomes very upset, and try again the next day. With patience and practice, most babies will learn to accept these feedings, making the transition to child care that much easier.

by Kim Walker, RN, PNP

Resources and References

African-American Breastfeeding Alliance at www.aabaonline.com.

American Academy of Pediatrics at www.aap.org.

Breastfeeding and Working, Bananas Child Care Information and Referral, 1999.

Breastfeeding Basics www.breastfeedingbasics.org.

Getting Ready for Childcare, WIC.

La Leche League at www.lalecheleague.org.

National Women's Health Information Center, *Without Weaning: Guide to Breastfeeding*, Neifert, Marianne.



Provided by California Childcare Health Program
For more information, please contact:
Healthline 1-800-333-3212

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