Easing the transition back to work after having a child

If you're returning to work after having a child, you'll soon have two sets of responsibilities to juggle. While some new parents manage it all without missing a beat, others may struggle to balance their double duties. As there are many things you can do to help make the experience easier.



The more you can prepare in advance, the easier the transition will be for everyone.

Easing back into the workplace

As your return date approaches, begin to reconnect with your colleagues. Consider inviting a co-worker for lunch to catch up on news, calling your supervisor to get a handle on current projects, or trying to arrange for staff e-mails to be accessed at home.

Other strategies for a smooth return include:

- Seeking out the counsel of friends who have recently had a baby and returned to work.
- Taking a little time to review your wardrobe. You may find your previous work attire no longer fits.
- If you're breast-feeding, you'll need to choose clothes that allow for easy nursing or breast pumping, and don't forget to protect clothes against nursing leaks.
- If possible, begin your child care arrangements a few weeks prior to returning to work, even on a part-time basis. This will help ease both you and your child into your new routine. It can also ensure you have given your child care provider all the information and items they'll need.

Planning with your partner

It's important that your spouse is fully involved in your transition back to the workplace. Early communication will give you both support and help to make this transition easier. Discuss tasks that may be more difficult to cover with both of you working, and try to share responsibilities equally. Perhaps some tasks can be done less often. You may both need to give up on perfectionist standards for a while. If you can afford it, you may want to discuss hiring help for cleaning or yard maintenance.

Consider how you will share child care. Perhaps one partner can drop the baby off or stay home in the morning until the caregiver arrives. The other partner might be able to handle the evening pick up.

Making emergency plans

Having backup plans in place will make it easier to cope when things don't go smoothly.

- Review emergency child care options close to your home or near your workplace to create a support system.
- Get to know neighbours with small children or the parents of other children at your daycare centre.
- Ask about the possibility of extended hours with your child care provider.

Nursing at work

You can continue breastfeeding after returning to work. Be sure to nurse before you leave for work, as soon as you get home, and as often as needed at night. Provide some emergency formula or expressed milk for your caregiver in case you must miss a feeding.

Upon returning to work rent or buy a good breast pump. Look for portability, ease of cleaning, ease of use, and a setting for intermittent pressure, which is gentler on the breasts. Have plenty of nursing pads, disposable wipes and paper towels at your workplace for easier clean up, plus tape or labels to mark containers of breast milk. If you don't have access to a fridge, bring a small cooler with an ice pack.

Whether nursing or pumping, try wearing a nursing bra. They are much easier to undo. Keep a spare shirt or blouse at work just in case. Patterned or dark coloured blouses help mask the occasional leak.

Returning to work after a maternity leave can present new challenges for the whole family. Good communication and planning can help to make this a successful transition for all involved.