



australian  
breastfeeding  
association

## Breastfeeding & Work or Study

### *Yes, you can work or study and breastfeed!*

Many mothers are able to combine breastfeeding and returning to work or study. There are health benefits to this, for mother and baby. By continuing to breastfeed you can also maintain that special bond with your baby while you are apart.

### *Why is breastfeeding important?*

Breastfeeding is the normal way to feed your baby. Breastmilk is the best and cheapest food for babies. It contains antibodies that help keep a baby from getting sick and helps build up a baby's resistance to disease. Breastfeeding helps in the development of your baby's eyesight, hearing, intelligence, and speech. Breastfed babies are less likely to get many childhood illnesses, and are even protected from some adult diseases. Breastfeeding is also good for you, as it helps prevent osteoporosis, ovarian and breast cancer in later life.



### *First steps towards breastfeeding and working or studying*

- Discuss your breastfeeding needs with your employer well in advance of your return to work.
- If you have an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Officer, Human Resources Group or Personnel Group, or are a member of a union, check their attitudes and knowledge of breastfeeding policies.
- You may be able to have your baby brought to you at work. Talk about this with your employer. Discuss also the possibility of breastfeeding during breaks and lunchtime, and flexible work hours and breaks.
- You will need a private space (not the toilet area) with a comfortable chair to either feed your baby or express. You may also need a refrigerator where you can store expressed breastmilk, somewhere you can store an electric breast pump or manual breast pump, and time to express milk during lunch break and other breaks.
- Consider purchasing or hiring an electric breast pump to make expressing at work quicker.
- Be aware that expressing may seem difficult at first but most working mothers say they get very good at it quickly, and the benefits are worth the effort.
- Consider all options. Be creative, be persistent, be positive.

## ***Choosing a Caregiver for Your Baby***

There are many options when selecting a caregiver for your baby including a long day or occasional childcare centre, family day care, a privately-paid caregiver or family member/friend. Each has benefits and you will have to decide which best suits your needs.

Some things to consider:

- What are the caregiver's policies and procedures regarding infant feeding?
- How supportive is the caregiver of your plans to breastfeed your baby?
- What kind of training does the caregiver have for heating and feeding of expressed breastmilk?
- What do the facilities provide, regarding storage and heating of breastmilk?
- Has the caregiver read ABA's *Care-Giver's Guide to the Breastfed Baby*?

## ***Hints for Mothers - We Can Work it Out!***

- Learn how to hand express or use a breast pump at least a couple of weeks before you go back to work.
- When the baby is about 4-6 weeks old you can give the baby a few practice runs to get used to taking breastmilk from a bottle, spoon or cup.
- Have a small stock of expressed breastmilk ready in your freezer.
- Child-care close to work means you can go to feed your baby during breaks and lessen the time between breastfeeds.
- Access to a refrigerator at work means the breastmilk you express during your time away can be saved for feeding to baby next time you work.
- When you return to work, you may find that your breasts take a while to adjust to the change in feeding pattern.
- You may find it helpful to ease into a working schedule, and to have a few 'practice runs' with the caregiver.

### ***Is it more difficult to leave a breastfed baby?***

Breastfed babies are no more difficult to leave than bottle-fed babies.

Breastfed babies are all individuals, and just as with bottle-fed babies, some are more clingy than others. However, you can make it easier to leave your baby by gradually increasing the time you are away and leaving him with the same familiar caregivers.

\*Discuss an appropriate orientation plan with the caregiver.

## ***Options for Expressing Breastmilk***

There are several ways to express breastmilk, by hand or using a manual or electric breast pump. Each woman has her own preference. You may like to try each method to see what works for you. You may be able to hire an electric breast pump from your local ABA group.

Some mothers find it difficult to trigger their let-down reflex when away from the baby. The let-down is what pushes the milk out of the breast. If you do not have a let-down, then you will not be able to express milk for your baby. It is important to practice expressing to find the best way for you to trigger a let-down and maximize the amount of milk expressed. The ABA booklet *Expressing and Storing Breastmilk* provides detailed information on how to express, including how to trigger a let-down.

## ***Ways you can work or study and breastfeed***

**Young baby: 6 weeks-6 months... one of these may work for you.**

- 1) Go to your baby for each feed  
Have the baby at work with you  
Your caregiver may be able to bring the baby to you or telephone for you to come  
Arrange child-care close to your work
- 2) When you are at work, you can leave your own milk in a bottle or cup for the caregiver to feed your baby. You will need to leave enough for the feeds you will miss. Feed your baby just before you leave, and as soon as you come home.  
  
While you are at work, you may need to express your milk once or twice. This depends on how long you are at work and how full your breasts feel. You can do this in your breaks, and if possible keep the milk for the next day's feed.
- 3) Arrange for the baby to have bottles of infant formula when you are at work, and to breastfeed frequently for the rest of the day, at night and at weekends.

### **Older baby**

- Continue to leave expressed milk and other suitable food.
- Partially wean the baby. The baby is given infant formula or other suitable weaning food when you are away, and breastfeeds when you're at home.

### ***What if your baby won't take a bottle?***

Some mothers worry that a breastfed baby will not feed from a bottle and this is going to be a problem when they go back to work.

- Get baby used to taking the bottle occasionally. After breastfeeding is established, about 4-6 weeks, give some expressed breastmilk in a bottle or cup. Try once or twice a week.
- Ask someone else to give the bottles, while you stay out of the baby's sight. If possible, get the person who will be looking after the baby later to give the bottle. This is often the best way for baby to get used to the changes.
- Some mothers find it easier to teach their babies to drink from a cup than a bottle. For small babies use an ordinary cup or glass with a fine rim. Older babies (6 months or more) like to drink from other baby cups available in shops.



Even little babies can be fed with a cup, which helps avoid 'nipple confusion.'

For help with breastfeeding questions in the Goulburn Valley please contact:

- **Your local Maternal and Child Health Nurse**
- **Goulburn Valley Health Lactation Day Stay Unit  
(5831 1370)**
- **Australian Breastfeeding Association Breastfeeding  
Counsellors**
  - Tish (5800 1234) - Ann (5829 8235)

OR the Australian Breastfeeding Association

## **24 hour Breastfeeding Helpline**

### **1800 686 2 686**

*If you are unable to access the Breastfeeding Helpline it may be due to your phone service using internet technology (eg VOIP phone). Drop the last number and call 1800 686 2 68.*



australian  
breastfeeding  
association

This pamphlet was produced by the Australian Breastfeeding Association in conjunction with the City of Greater Shepparton **Best Start** Demonstration Project.



**This leaflet is supported by the following agencies:**

- \*Australian Breastfeeding Association - Shepparton
- \*Goulburn Valley Community Health Service
- \*Goulburn Valley Health Lactation Unit
  - \*Goulburn Valley Family Care
- \*Maternal and Child Health Services
- \* Greater Shepparton City Council