

Return to Work When Breastfeeding



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- ▶ Author: Breastfeeding Twins and Triplets; a guide for professionals and parents

What we will cover

- ▶ Feelings around returning to work
- ▶ Planning
- ▶ Maintaining milk supply
- ▶ Expressing and storage
- ▶ How much milk and how to give it to baby?
- ▶ Common worries challenges
- ▶ Practical solutions



Feelings around returning to work

- ▶ Mixed emotions
- ▶ Having to let go of being totally responsible for the child's care
- ▶ Worry about how the baby will settle
- ▶ Will it affect their bond?
- ▶ Overwhelm with planning and choosing options
- ▶ Nice to get old self back
- ▶ Return to something they love
- ▶ Work is easier?
- ▶ Financial relief

- ▶ Discuss all of these with empathy and without judgement

Planning the return to work

- ▶ Talking to their employer well in advance
- ▶ Timing of returning to work
- ▶ Flexible work options?
- ▶ Know their rights
- ▶ Discussing expressing breaks, pumping room, milk storage
- ▶ Other concerns - shift work, late finishes, overnight travel, dangerous substances
- ▶ Plan childcare
- ▶ How much milk do they need to stash in advance?

Planning the return to work

- ▶ Talk to their childcare provider
- ▶ Do they have a written policy on storage and handling human milk?
- ▶ Make sure they have a fridge - must remain 4 degrees or lower
- ▶ Expressed milk must be clearly labelled with name of child and date it was expressed in screw cap bottles or food grade bags
- ▶ First in, first out - use oldest milk first
- ▶ They need to warm milk, swirl to mix in the fat - no microwaving
- ▶ Test the temperature of the milk
- ▶ Hand hygiene
- ▶ Paced and responsive feeding, no propping

Shared parental leave

- ▶ Shared parental leave is a nice idea in principle, ie both parents getting to look after the baby
- ▶ However, when introducing this to a system, breastfeeding needs to be thought about.
- ▶ Shared parental leave in reality means the breastfeeding parent returning to work earlier, which has a big impact on the breastfeeding relationship
- ▶ So alongside the option for shared parental leave, protection of breastfeeding through paid breaks for expressing, expressing rooms, milk storage facilities and flexible working hours **SHOULD** be mandatory.
- ▶ Parents need to be educated before making the decision



► Milk production and expressing

Maintaining milk supply

- ▶ Very much dependent on the age of the baby when returning to work
- ▶ If baby is young, still exclusively breastfed or just beginning to start solid food this is more of a worry
- ▶ Where solids are the main source of nutrients (12 mths+, perhaps earlier) it is much less stressful
- ▶ Milk production is flexible and should be robust enough to allow for changing feeding/expressing patterns

Maintaining milk supply - basics

- ▶ Prioritise direct breastfeeding whenever the mother and baby are together
- ▶ Try to offer a feed before leaving for work and begin separated
- ▶ Make sure caregiver has not given milk just before you arrive home. Message in advance if there is a change of plan. It is really important to have a “reunion feed” as soon as they are reunited.
- ▶ Breastfeed responsively when together
- ▶ Is it possible to breastfeed baby in the daytime?
- ▶ Do not night wean if baby is not taking much milk, reverse cycling is helpful
- ▶ There is no need to have a routine the same as your work days on non work days

Maintaining milk supply - under 9 mths

- ▶ Most parents find they can express less frequently than the baby feeds and continue to maintain production
- ▶ Important not to feel too engorged as this impacts flow of milk and can lead to blocked ducts and mastitis. Reduces supply.
- ▶ Babies often change their feeding patterns when returning to work, which can help maintain supply - reverse cycling and feeding more on non-work days for connection.
- ▶ Expressing every 3-4 hours is likely to mean they can maintain supply, so that may be once or twice in a working day.

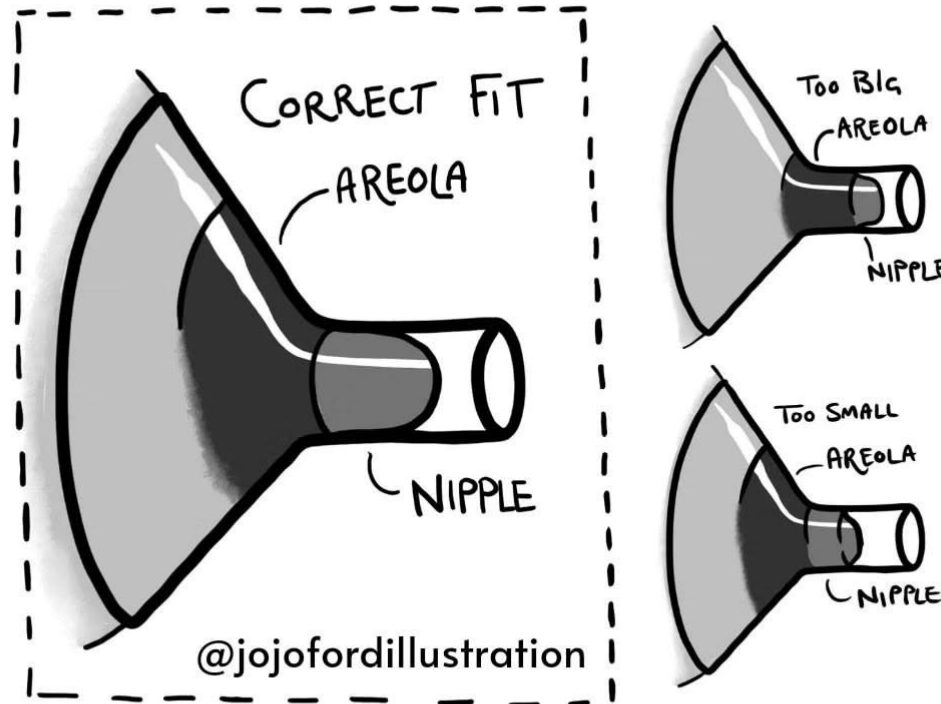
Maintaining milk supply - over 9 mths

- ▶ Many older babies are starting to gain more nutrition from eating solid food somewhere between 9-12 months.
- ▶ This can be very useful!
- ▶ They may not need much milk when separated from the breastfeeding parent
- ▶ Milk production is very flexible
- ▶ With a fairly predictable work pattern, breasts learn to make less milk on work days and more on non work days
- ▶ They may be able to regulate their supply and not need to express at work but continue to breastfeed more when together.

Expressing preparation

- ▶ How much expressing will they need to do?
- ▶ Is there access to electricity in their place of work?
- ▶ Does their company have paid breaks?
- ▶ Will there be a dedicated space?
- ▶ Milk storage?
- ▶ What pump do they already own?
- ▶ Can they hand express?
- ▶ Which pump would work best in their scenario?
- ▶ Have they been fitted for the correct size flange? (cone)

Flange fit for efficient and comfortable pumping



Which pump?

- ▶ Dual piston double electric pumps are the most efficient, however they are large and not so easy to travel with.
- ▶ Single piston double pumps lose their suction a bit when double pumping
- ▶ Single electric pumps mean you have to pump for twice as long
- ▶ Wearable pumps generally have a silicon flange which makes them less efficient than those pumps with a hard plastic flange
- ▶ Hand pumps work well, are cheap and light and no need for electricity. But they make your hand ache!
- ▶ Hand expressing means no need for equipment, but they need a good technique and it also makes your hand ache!



How often to express?

- ▶ This depends if they are pumping for yield (to give baby a certain amount of milk) or pumping for comfort when baby is older.
- ▶ Engorgement decreases the flow of milk.
- ▶ Parent may feel a milk ejection reflex at around the time baby feeds or within an hour or two, this is a good time to express.
- ▶ If it is not possible, try to express as near to this as possible.
- ▶ Another milk ejection reflex may happen a little later and breasts will begin to feel uncomfortable. Try to express now!
- ▶ Is there extra milk in storage? Do they want to introduce formula?

How often to express?

- ▶ For yield - express as many times as it takes to make the milk they need for the next day, or as near to it as they can.
- ▶ They can express after the reunion feed with their baby if necessary
- ▶ They could express once or twice on non work days if they are short

- ▶ To express for comfort and to down-regulate production on work days, express when breasts feel full, before they are engorged.
- ▶ Express to soften but not necessarily a “full expressing session”. Supply will gradually regulate, reducing on work days during the day but maintaining when they are together and breastfeeding responsively

MILK STORAGE GUIDELINES

**ROOM
TEMPERATURE**

**REFRIGERATOR
4°C**

**FREEZER
-18°C**

**FRESHLY
PUMPED**

4 - 6 HOURS

6 DAYS

**6 MTHS BEST
12 MTHS OK**

**PREVIOUSLY
FROZEN/
THAWED**

1 - 2 HOURS

24 HOURS

**NEVER
REFREEZE**

**LEFTOVER
MILK FROM
A FEED**

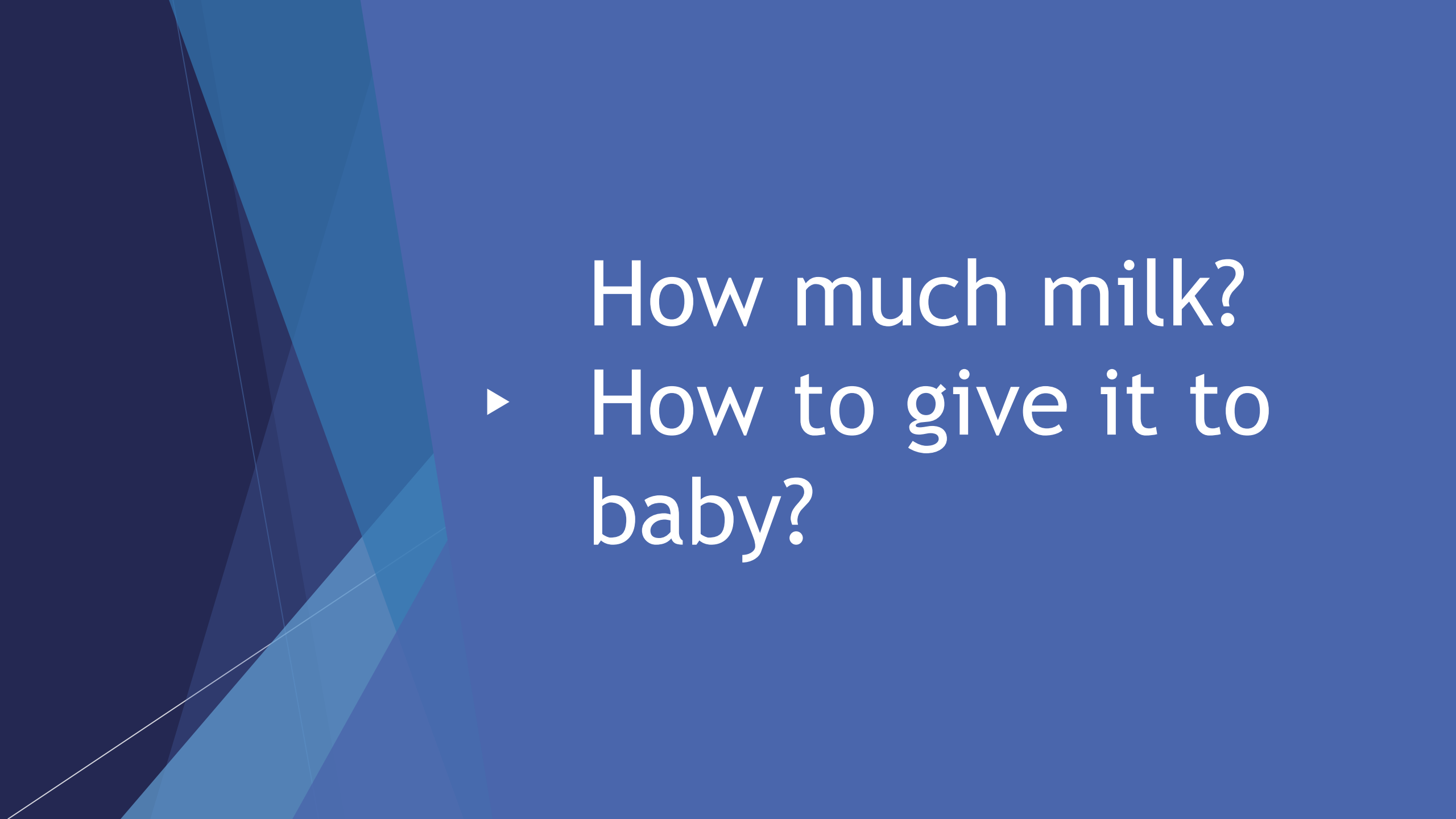
USE WITHIN 2 HOURS



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Practical tips

- ▶ Pumping bra or wearable pump
- ▶ Insulated bag with frozen inserts for travel
- ▶ Used pump parts can be kept in insulated bag/fridge and used again if washing not possible - keeps milk residue cold
- ▶ Wear accessible tops
- ▶ Darker colours/patterns reduce risk of milk stains from leaking/spilling
- ▶ Change of top
- ▶ Something to cover chest area - scarf, cardigan etc



How much milk?

- ▶ How to give it to baby?

Babies under 6 months - no solids

- ▶ Rough guide 30mls per hour of separation
- ▶ Breastfed babies often feed little and often, bottle fed babies tend to have larger feeds less frequently.
- ▶ Many breastfed babies will take less milk from a bottle than bottle fed babies
- ▶ Breastfed babies will generally take between 60-120ml
- ▶ Breastfeeding is a 24/7 thing - they can make up for it later and may feed more frequently on non work days
- ▶ Breastfeed just before separation, and as soon as reunited. Encourage cluster feeding

Babies 6-9 months

- ▶ May still need 30mls per hour, but probably less now eating solids
- ▶ As solids increase, milk intake may decrease
- ▶ Less worrying if baby does not have as much milk
- ▶ Breastfed babies will generally take between 60-120ml
- ▶ Breastfeeding is a 24/7 thing - they can make up for it later and may feed more frequently on non work days
- ▶ Breastfeed just before separation, and as soon as reunited.
Encourage cluster feeding

Babies 9-12 months

- ▶ At this stage, milk intake during the time of separation is much less worrying
- ▶ As solids increase, milk intake may decrease
- ▶ Babies of this age may be fine going longer stretches without milk
- ▶ Some may be fine with no milk and just food and water, as long as being responsively breastfed when together.
- ▶ If baby is sleeping through the night this may be more concerning

How to give milk

- ▶ If baby already drinks from a bottle regularly, they can continue to use a bottle up to around 1 year
- ▶ If baby has not had a bottle or now does not take a bottle, it is not usually necessary to introduce one, especially for babies who are also eating solids
- ▶ Milk can be given by open cup from birth, cup with free-flowing spout from about 4 months, weighted straw cup from 6 to 9 months
- ▶ Milk can also be given in food



My personal story

- ▶ Returned to work at 6.5 months with 3rd baby
- ▶ 4 days/week
- ▶ 07:30-17:00 child minder
- ▶ He refused all expressed milk

- ▶ Common worries
and challenges with
practical solutions

Letting go

- ▶ When returning to work and leaving baby with other care givers it can be very stressful
- ▶ More trusted adults in your child's life
- ▶ Care giver's responsibility to form that trusting relationship, the mother cannot actually help with this!
- ▶ They will not be able to “rescue” once back at work
- ▶ Set boundaries and strategies around communication, for the care giver, and the mother!

Do they need to change how they parent?

- ▶ From a young age, babies begin to understand that different people give comfort and parent in different ways
- ▶ It is normal for babies to have a preference to breastfeed with the breastfeeding parent
- ▶ Breastfeeding is part of their unique relationship
- ▶ Babies tend to be more open to other ways of settling with other caregivers
- ▶ More confusing for baby if the breast is being withheld when it is available to use!

Daytime sleep

- ▶ Many breastfed babies prefer to breastfeed to sleep for daytime naps. But they may be open to other options
- ▶ If the breasts are not available, they are normally more open to other options.
- ▶ It is the responsibility of the care give to ensure baby is feeling safe and secure enough to fall asleep.
- ▶ Sharing tips is fine, but the breastfeeding parent does not need to stop breastfeeding to sleep
- ▶ Closeness and movement are generally the things that can help a breastfed baby fall asleep without the breast

Night-time sleep

- ▶ Many parents are worried about how they will manage if baby is wakeful at night
- ▶ Problem - big changes of circumstances are one of the main causes of more frequent night waking!
- ▶ Can lead to an increase in separation anxiety, clingy daytime behaviour and more night waking
- ▶ Babies often like to reverse-cycle, even if they are drinking a lot of milk in the daytime. It is about connection, calming and feeling safe
- ▶ This can be useful if baby is not taking much milk in the daytime
- ▶ Make night-times as easy as possible
- ▶ Know it should pass once baby has settled into the new routine

Saying goodbye

- ▶ It is important to say goodbye properly and not just sneak away, even for younger babies! Yes baby may get upset, but it is more traumatic for baby to just find they have disappeared.
- ▶ Babies need to learn to trust that they go out, and that they come back. Saying goodbye is part of this trust.
- ▶ Keep goodbyes brief and loving, especially if baby gets upset.
- ▶ Keeping going back to comfort prolongs and often worsens the situation
- ▶ The caregiver can use distraction, comfort and fun to help them settle - mum can go and cry in the car if they need to!
- ▶ Ask for a photo once they have settled down to give them peace of mind

Saying Hello

- ▶ Baby will likely need a “reunion feed” the minute they see them
- ▶ Plan for this
- ▶ They may need a feed in the creche/nursery
- ▶ If not allowed, they may need to feed outside, in the car, on the bus ..
- ▶ If reuniting at home, if they need a minute to sort themselves out after travelling, change clothes, go to the toilet etc, message ahead and ask caregiver to distract for a minute whilst they do all you need to do. Then they can be fully present for their baby
- ▶ Sometimes a baby may ignore their mum for a little bit, or they may show challenging behaviour when reunited. They are upset because they were left and need to let them know. It should be temporary.

Summing up

- ▶ Remember mothers have been returning to work throughout our evolution.
- ▶ Even in traditional societies, babies would become too heavy to carry and would be left at home with the older family whilst the mothers worked
- ▶ Yes it will be a roller-coaster of emotions
- ▶ There will be days when they just want to be with baby, there will be other days when they wished they were at work!
- ▶ The breastfeeding relationship can be maintained throughout this process, and in my opinion, it really helps everybody transition.
- ▶ That feed when you first come through the door and everyone relaxes is magical



Thank You!

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