

GETTING BACK TO WORK

10 Steps for a Smooth Transition*

As a new parent, do you find yourself agonizing over whether to return to work? Making this decision can be difficult. Should you choose to go back to work, don't despair. Changing your lifestyle can be stressful, but if you approach it in a positive manner, things will go much easier. Here are 10 steps to make your transition to work run smoothly.

1. Start a child care routine that would be the same as your work schedule at least a week in advance before returning to work. If you will have a caregiver, this will allow you and your child the opportunity to become acquainted and to make adjustments as needed.
2. Your caregiver needs to know as much information about your child as possible. This includes details such as your child's likes, dislikes and favorite activities.
3. Once you have visited with the caregiver and feel you are ready to leave your child alone with them, do so for a few hours at a time. Continue to increase your time away from your child until you are gone for the expected length of your work day.
4. Your child may cling to you when you are about to leave. If this happens, make sure you allow extra time for this daily routine. Also, never leave your child without saying goodbye, even when it seems like it would be easier not to. It's important for your child to know where you are going and to be reassured that you will be back.
5. If you plan to breastfeed or bottle-feed with breast milk once you return to work, follow these steps when making the change from home to work two to four weeks in advance:
 - Talk to your child care provider about your feelings about breastfeeding, and make sure you have a back-up child care plan with a person who is comfortable with your decision
 - Acquire a good breast pump and learn how to use it well
 - Teach your baby to accept a bottle
6. Before you return to work, you should:
 - Arrange a short first week at work
 - Encourage your spouse, friends, and relatives to support you
 - Find a comfortable place at work where you can use your pump
 - Select clothes that make pumping and nursing easy
7. You may want to consider a different work alternative by reworking your schedule so you can work outside the typical work hours. This flextime will give you the opportunity to coordinate a schedule that suits you, your family and your workplace.
8. Attending professional courses, workshops, parent support groups, or one on one counseling sessions can be very helpful during your transition period.
9. Depending on how long you have been out of the workforce, determine whether you need to take courses to improve your skills and knowledge. You will find this experience not only challenging, but also rewarding.
10. Become as organized as possible the night before work to avoid a last minute crisis in the morning. This may also give you more quality morning time to spend with your child.

* *Information provided by The Florida Children's Forum*

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