

## ***Maintaining Milk Supply when Mother and Baby are Apart***

Some mothers overflow with milk no matter what they do. Others have more trouble maintaining milk supply when they are regularly apart from baby. Here are some ideas for keeping your milk supply up.

- Give yourself two weeks to store milk and practice different feeding methods before returning to work. Remember that there are lots of ways to get milk into a baby so if your baby refuses a bottle, consider using a sippy cup or medicine spoon.
- Consider returning to work on a Thursday so you only have to prepare for a couple of days before you have a weekend to recover.
- Try an automatic double pump. For some mothers the pump doesn't matter, for others it really makes a difference. Some manual pumps have bubble inserts that help massage the breasts during pumping. These inserts can also be used with electric double pumps.
- Pump frequently during the day, at least every three hours, every two hours if your milk supply is declining. Shorter frequent pumping sessions will produce more milk than longer pumping sessions further apart. When figuring out how long your day is, be sure to include commute time: an 8 hour day can stretch to 10 hours if you have a long drive.
- Often more frequent, shorter separations are easier to manage than fewer, longer separations. For example, if you are working 20 hours per week, four five-hour days will be easier than two ten-hour days.
- Applying heat to the breasts or massaging the breasts can stimulate let-down. Some mothers say that keeping a picture of their baby in front of them while they're pumping can help stimulate letdown.
- Take a break during pumping to massage, stroke, and shake your breasts. This will sometimes stimulate another letdown.
- Have your baby at your breast as often as possible when you're at home. Many mothers who are away during the day find that nighttime nursings are essential in keeping milk supply up. This is a time to let other projects, housework, gourmet meals, etc. go by the wayside for a few months.
- Can your partner bring your baby to you during the day? Your baby is more efficient at getting milk than any pump, so a lunch time nursing break will make a big difference.
- If you can, take a nursing vacation. One or two days with baby at your breast can make a tremendous difference.
- Some herbal preparations have been reported to increase milk supply, but these claims have not been proven. If you want to explore this, contact an herbalist or lactation consultant

Some of these recommendations sound like they'll take a lot of time. But in just a few months, sometime around the middle of your baby's first year, you'll start introducing solid foods and a few months after that may find that you don't need to pump at all during the day. This is less time than you were pregnant.