

# The Working Mother And Breastfeeding

## Going Back To Work

It is possible to continue breastfeeding the baby after returning to work. Some may be fortunate in having daycare at work, or work may be so close to home that they can return for nursing during breaks in their working time. Most mothers are not able to do this, however. Working outside the home is often cited as a reason for the decline in breastfeeding rates around the world because breastfeeding and working are seen as mutually exclusive activities. In India, maternity leave is variable, nursing breaks are unofficial and childcare facilities at the work place remain inadequate. On top of this if social support is lacking, the frequency of formula supplementation increases significantly, and breastfeeding duration declines.

✂ **A woman needs someone to nurture her when she is nurturing the child. A partner can give support by helping in the household chores**

Health professionals can play an important role in helping working mothers to breastfeed by invigorating them and giving useful information. Working mothers should continue breastfeeding

### ***More and more working women choose to breastfeed, Why?***

This is because of awareness that

- Breastmilk is the best nutrition for their baby and it is protective.
- Breastfed babies are healthier; a working mother cannot afford the additional worry of a sick child.
- Breastfeeding saves money, which was to be spent on bottlefeeding. It may cost about Rs.

500 a month to feed a 3 month old baby on top milk.

- Working women don't have to rush around to prepare bottlefeeds.
- It is better to breastfeed fewer times than not to breastfeed at all.
- Commercial formulas are inferior to breastmilk.

### ***Before mother returns to work:***

Advice her to enjoy this special time with her baby. Breastfeed exclusively and frequently for the whole maternity leave. Frequent demand feeding will help establish a good milk supply.

- Teach her how to express breastmilk.
- A few days before she returns to work, advice her to give expressed breastmilk feed to her baby by a cup or spoon.

✂ **Demand create supply, and this will simply produce milk**

### **Joining Work:**

#### **Advice mother to:**

- Breastfeed early in the morning.
- Just before leaving for work and then again when she comes back.
- The caretaker can use cup and spoon to feed in her absence.
- She can express breastmilk during working hours and store it, if possible. When she comes back in the evening, after 1/2 an hour relaxation she can breastfeed the baby frequently.
- She can collect milk from one breast while nursing from the other breast.
- Keep the baby with her at night as it makes breastfeeding easier.

- If leaking is a problem, nursing pads, camouflage clothing and more frequent expression can help.

**☞ If you notice the milk is leaking out when you are at work and not about to nurse, press your elbows firmly against the outer margins of your breasts. This will slow down the flow.**

#### **Hand Expression of Breastmilk**

All mothers should learn to express their breastmilk. This can be taught during pregnancy and practiced soon after birth.

Expressing milk is useful to:

- Feed a low birth weight or sick baby.
- Relieve engorgement.
- Maintain the milk supply when the mother is ill.
- Relieve leaking breasts.
- Leave milk for the baby when the mother goes out, or to work.
- Feed a baby while s/he learns suckling from inverted nipples.

Hand expression is the most useful method. A woman should express her own milk. Before expression it is useful to stimulate the oxytocin reflex to assure a copious milk flow.

#### **How to stimulate oxytocin reflex**

*Help her psychologically*

- Build mother's confidence.
- Try to reduce source of pain or anxiety.
- Help her to have good thoughts and feelings.

*Give her practical help*

*Help her or advise her to*

- Find a quiet place and ensure privacy.
- Hold her baby on her lap with skin to skin contact and look at the baby.
- Take a warm soothing drink.
- Warm the breast with warm water.
- Stimulate her nipples by massaging the breasts gently towards the nipple and stroking the nipple and areola gently with fingertips, or gently rolling a closed fist over the breast.
- Ask a helper to rub the knuckles of her fist firmly up and down her back, on either side of

the spine from the neck to the shoulder blades for 1 to 2 minutes.

#### **Method of expression**

For expression of milk the mother should wash her hands thoroughly and sit or stand comfortably holding a clean container near the breast. The thumb and the first finger should be placed on the areola above and below the nipple opposite each other (Fig. 8 a). The thumb and the finger should be pressed inward towards the chest wall, then the areola behind the nipple should be pressed between the finger and thumb so that the lactiferous sinuses beneath the areola are compressed. (Fig. 8 b)

Pressure should be alternately given and released till the flow of milk starts. If the procedure is painful, the technique is wrong. The fingers should not be slid along the skin nor should the nipple itself be squeezed. Pressing or pulling the nipple cannot express the milk. Pressure should be given on all the sides to ensure expression from all segments of the breasts (Fig. 8 c). The breast should be expressed for at least 3 to 5 minutes until the flow slows, then express the other side and repeat alternately.

Some mothers can express 2 cups (400-500 ml) or even more after the baby has breastfed. But even 1 cup (200 ml) can give the baby 3 feeds a day of 60-70 ml each.

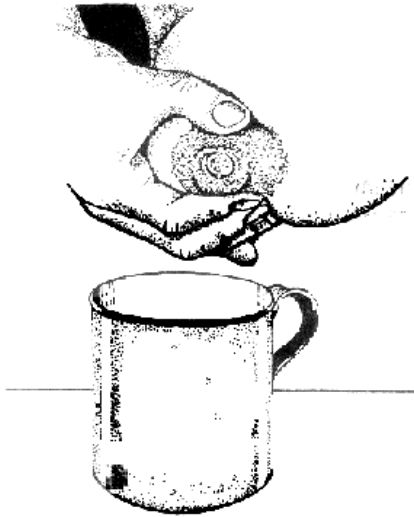
**☞ To express milk adequately it takes 20 to 30 minutes. It is important not to attempt expression in a shorter time.**

#### **Storage of expressed breastmilk:**

Fresh breastmilk can be stored in a refrigerator for 24 hours and at room temperature for 8 hours. Refrigerated breastmilk should not be heated, as it will lose protective properties. It should be brought to room temperature before feeding the child.

### Mixed Feeding

In case a decision to give top milk is made mother can continue to breastfeed when at



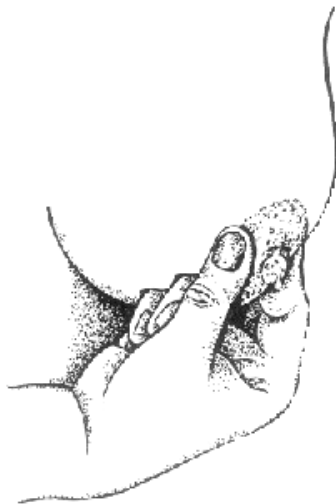
home and the baby can be given top milk by the care-taker when she goes out to

work. It is preferable to use fresh animal milk than the commercial baby foods. In case a mother decides to give cow's milk, to make 1 cup (200 ml) of feed,

cup (100-200 ml) of mixture for each feed. It is best to use a cup and spoon to feed the baby. They are easier to clean than a feeding bottle and nipple. Bottle and nipple are easily contaminated



and expose the baby to an added risk of infection. When a mother goes to work she may find that her breasts become very full during the day. It is important to relieve by expressing the milk for few



boil  $\frac{3}{4}$  (150 ml) of cow's milk and  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of water. Add 1 level spoonful of sugar (15 g). Leave  $\frac{1}{2}$  to 1

days till the breasts adjust to the new routine.