

Happy Breastfeeding Awareness Month! August 1<sup>st</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> is designated as World Breastfeeding Awareness Week. World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) is a global network committed to the protection, promotion, and support of breastfeeding worldwide. This year slogan for WABA is “Enable Breastfeeding. Making a Difference for Working Parents.” The objective is to encourage governments, health systems, work places and communities to inspire families and sustaining breastfeeding-friendly environments in work after the pandemic. As everyone is aware the pandemic changed our lives in many ways and the way we work was one of the biggest changes we faced. COVID-19 challenged expecting woman dearly! It brought forth an increase in unemployment, loss of livelihood, obstructed access to prenatal, postnatal, breastfeeding support, and healthcare services.

To help prepare you and your baby for breastfeeding in the work place there are steps you can take before your baby arrives to help ensure a successful breastfeeding journey. Learn as much as possible about breastfeeding. Talk with your supervisor about your decision to continue breastfeeding after you return to work. You could provide them with information about the benefits of breastfeeding to your employer that highlights the benefits for the company such as decreased health care costs and days off sick. Explore the possibility of returning to work part time or job sharing with another employee. It usually takes 3 or 4 weeks to establish a good milk supply and it is essential to make sure you have established your milk supply before returning to work. Avoid all bottles and pacifiers while establishing your supply. Start building a reserve supply of frozen milk about two weeks before returning to work. If possible, you should try to have your first day back on a Thursday or Friday. This will give you the weekend to rest and change plans if needed.

If you can bring your baby to work, try to be prepared with a space ready for you to breastfeed. If bringing your baby to work is not an option, ask for a private space at work for pumping your milk. Federal wage and labor law now requires that employers provide breastfeeding mothers the time and space to pump. A bathroom is NOT acceptable! You may consider packing a bag to keep in your car or at work with an extra shirt/bra in case of leaking. It is good to have safe place for your pumped milk as well. A portable cooler with an ice pack will keep expressed milk cool if a refrigerator is not available. If you are willing to do child care close to your workplace, you can try to breastfeed your baby on breaks and lunch. When pumping and saving your milk is not possible, you can breastfeed when you are with your baby and your child care provider offer a supplement when you are separated. Do keep in mind this can lower your supply and can result in having to use more formula. This can possibly end breastfeeding all together as well do to it being supply and demand type thing. If you are not removing milk from your breast, this will trick your breast into thinking you do not need to make it.

These steps will help ensure you have a successful breastfeeding journey while returning to work. If you have further questions about breastfeeding and returning to work, I am the Breastfeeding Peer Helper up at the Meigs County WIC Office located at the Meigs County Health Department. My name is Amber Thompson and I would love to answer any breastfeeding questions you may have. I am in the office on Monday and Tuesdays; meanwhile, other staff members are available to assist you as well. We love helping and encouraging moms to breastfeed! Our office hours are 8AM-4PM Monday-Friday; however, we are out to lunch from 12PM-1PM daily. The WIC phone number is 740-992-0392.

Amber Thompson  
WIC Breastfeeding Peer Helper



