



Back to work... after a baby

This fact sheet is designed to support you with coming back to work after having a baby. So whether you are looking forward to it or the prospect fills you with dread the following information will help ensure that your return to work is as smooth as possible.

Returning to work after having a baby can feel like a big step! Some women look forward to it and for others, understandably, it can be an emotional time. Missing your baby, worries about leaving him or her (perhaps for the first time), stressing about the logistics of physically getting to work and apprehension about getting into work mode are all common anxieties.

Talk about work

Think that you've forgotten how to do your job? Don't worry, this is a common concern! It's natural to be apprehensive about doing your job when you've been off for a while. Keeping in contact with your employer before your return is a good idea so that you can alleviate some of the worries that you may have and plan your return together.

Keeping up-to-date with what's going on in work will help you feel less cut off, more in control and better prepared for managing your work load when you do go back.

Make a note of anything you think your employer can do to help your return to work and discuss this with them the next time you speak to them. Remember, your employer is keen to support you and to ensure that you are able to cope.

Tip: having regular dialogue with your employer is important - at first you may find that setting a specific time each day or week to go through things will help. You may also find it useful to speak to other working mums about how they juggle work and children and the positive aspects of working – especially if you are feeling unhappy about being away from your child.

Stay relaxed

It can be stressful just trying to get out of the door in the morning let alone cope with work. If you feel under pressure or overwhelmed by returning to work try to take a step back and relax.

Tip: try this quick deep breathing exercise for instant relaxation. Take a long slow breath in and then very slowly breathe out until all the breath is out. Really concentrate on relaxing your muscles. Repeat this 5 or 6 times. After doing it a few times you should start to feel more relaxed.

Make time to get active

Work breaks are a prime time to get active without the hassle of a babysitter. Not only will it give you more energy to cope with the demands of being a working mum it can help you stay a healthy weight, improve your mood and your quality of sleep – particularly if you have broken sleep or a baby that wakes very early.



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Tip: go for a brisk walk on your own (you may enjoy having some time to yourself) or with a colleague. Find out if there are any gyms or swimming pools nearby that you can use (check with your company to see if they have corporate deals).

Watch what you eat

Having a healthy balanced diet will give your body the energy that it needs to function and will help you concentrate. When you are preparing food make extra portions that you can freeze or take to work for lunch. With less time on your hands it's tempting to grab whatever you can when you can so make sure you have healthy snacks at hand and avoid too many shop bought sandwiches and snacks as these are often loaded with hidden fat and salt.

Tip: having a healthy nourishing breakfast can boost your energy levels and prepare you for the day ahead. If time is tight organise yourself as much as you can the night before so you'll feel less rushed and have time to eat. Eat plenty of fruit and vegetables with meals and as snacks to help boost your immune system and give you that extra buzz.

Sleep well

Anyone with a young baby knows that this may be easier said than done. Broken sleep can leave you feeling utterly exhausted. If your baby wakes in the night getting back to sleep can be a battle – often borne out of sheer pressure to get some sleep before the alarm goes off. Don't let frustration get the better of you. Try to stay relaxed – try the breathing exercise mentioned previously. If you are really restless get up and do something but try to avoid exposure to light which tells your brain that it's time to be awake.

Tip: go to bed early, especially if you are anticipating a disturbed night. When you are off work make the most of nap opportunities and try to recruit the help of relatives and friends so you can treat yourself to the occasional lie in!

SOS

If you feel like you are struggling to cope with your return to work speak to your manager or occupational health service. It is important to work together to ensure your return is as easy as possible.

Tip: don't struggle on – highlight any problems with your employer as soon as possible.

More information

Useful websites

Baby Centre website at www.babycentre.co.uk

Net Mums website at www.netmums.co.uk

This fact sheet contains general information produced by DPP: Developing Patient Partnerships which can be used as the first step to help you decide the best course of action to take when you or your family are not well. In the absence of any examination it is not possible to reliably diagnose and treat a medical condition. Diagnosis can only be carried out by a suitably qualified health professional after a consultation. The advice and guidance in the leaflet is the responsibility of DPP.

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