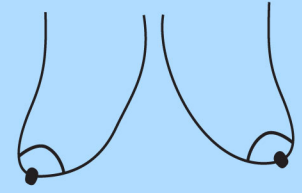


# WHAT EVERY OFFICE NEEDS: A **PUMPING ROOM** FOR NEW MUMS RETURNING TO PAID WORK



Returning to paid work for many new mothers comes with a heavy mental load and a ton of new logistics to consider, particularly if they are continuing to breastfeed their baby. As an employer, there are practices you can adopt and roll out to create a supportive, inclusive environment, including creating a pumping room in your workplace and offering flexible working hours to support their ability to pump when away from their child.

The World Health Organization recommends six months of exclusive breastfeeding and continued breastfeeding to two years and beyond. However, if a mother wants and can breastfeed, there is so much more we can do to support them as a society, and in the workforce.

In Australia, only 35% of babies are exclusively breastfed till the age of 6 months, with "back to work" cited as a common reason for early breastfeeding cessation\*.

In a recent Australian national workplace survey published by John Wiley & Sons Ltd, results found having a supportive workplace environment can lead to increased confidence in maintaining milk supply and extended durations of breastfeeding. Additionally, having education and awareness on the rights of breastfeeding women in the workplace, is a gender equity imperative that can improve experiences for them\*\*.

**“AS AN EMPLOYER AND AN EMPLOYEE WHO RETURNED TO PAID WORK WHILE BREASTFEEDING MY YOUNG BABY, I KNOW HOW IMPORTANT IT IS TO RETURN TO A SUPPORTIVE CULTURE, EQUIPPED WITH TOOLS, COMFORT AND FOR MANY, PRIVACY. IF THIS DOESN'T EXIST FOR YOU, ASK FOR IT, SO YOU CAN FEEL GOOD PROFESSIONALLY AND PERSONALLY.”**

– Phoebe Simmonds, co-founder of The Memo

## **So how can you support?**

Flexible hours and a pumping room are just two initiatives you can implement to support new mothers returning to paid work, which enables them to breastfeed when they need, easily. It will allow for improved retention of female employees, so that they feel good, empowered and supported in the workplace.

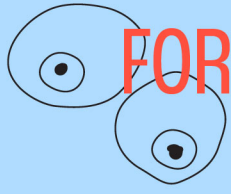
**the  
memo.**



### References

\* AIHW, Australia's mothers and babies: Breastfeeding, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/mothers-babies/breastfeeding-practices>

\*\* Burns, E., Elcombe, E., Pierce, H., Hugman, S., & Gannon, S. (2023). Breastfeeding after return to work: An Australian national workplace survey. *Maternal & Child Nutrition*, 19, e13516. <https://doi.org/10.1111/mcn.13516>



# WORKPLACE SUPPORT CHECKLIST FOR NEW MUMS RETURNING TO PAID WORK

## 1. IMPLEMENT A PUMPING ROOM

To express breastmilk at work, mothers will need a clean, private area (not a toilet) along with a comfortable seat and powerpoint to allow for use of an electric pump. This space will give breastfeeding employees the freedom to pump comfortably, and privately, as many times as they need (which can be three to four times in a typical work day).

You will also need to provide access to; a fridge to store the milk, an area to store and sterilise the breast pump parts and a place for employees to wash their hands.

## 3. ALLOW APPROPRIATE WORK BREAKS

The International Labour Organization recommends one or more daily breaks or a daily reduction of hours of work, counted as working time and remunerated accordingly.

Allowing for work breaks throughout the day is key for a mother to express milk or to breastfeed their baby. If they stop breastfeeding all day and don't express milk, their milk can dry up.

## 2. NO SPACE FOR A PUMPING ROOM? NO PROBLEM

If there is no space for a dedicated pumping room, or not much space, mothers may be able to use a first aid or sick room or other unused room. You may also be able to share a room with another business in your building or close by. Additionally, the ABA has awarded Baby Care Rooms that provide a comfortable, clean and welcoming place to express.

## 4. FLEXIBLE WORK OPTIONS

Balancing parenting and paid work can be a challenge. By offering flexible work options such as; gradual return-to-work plans, flexible start/finish times, working remotely and job sharing can really help alleviate employee worry/anxiety and encourage plans to return to work.

## 5. SUPPORT FROM THE EMPLOYER AND CO-WORKERS

Get the team on board! It can make a big difference if team members make other workers aware that they support breastfeeding at work.

