

GOLDEN MONTHS RESOURCE

Return-to-Work Workbook

Templates and timelines for a smooth transition back to work — logistics, pumping plans, and the emotional side.

Planning your return

Going back to work is a logistics problem and an emotional one. This workbook handles both, working backward from your first day so nothing lands on you at the last minute.

Eight weeks out

Task	Notes	Done
Confirm your return date in writing	Email your manager and HR; keep the reply	
Review your leave balance and pay	Paid leave, PTO, short-term disability, state benefits	
Research childcare seriously	Waitlists are long — start now, tour in person	
Ask about phased return options	Part-time ramp, remote days, adjusted start time	
Locate the lactation room policy	Federal law protects break time and private space for many workers	

Four weeks out

Task	Notes	Done
Do a childcare trial run	A half day tells you a lot	
Start building a milk stash, if pumping	One extra session a day is usually enough	
Practice the actual morning routine	Time it, then add twenty minutes	
Draft your first-week schedule	Include pumping or feeding blocks as real meetings	

Plan your wardrobe	Nursing-accessible, comfortable, and clean — reduce morning decisions	
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One week out

Task	Notes	Done
Confirm all childcare details in writing	Hours, backup plan, sick policy, contacts	
Prep meals and lunches	Batch cook one afternoon	
Set up your pumping kit	Parts, bags, cooler, labels, spare set at work	
Write your handoff and catch-up list	What you need to know from your team, day one	
Decide your notification boundaries	Photos during the day: yes or no?	

Pumping at work — a practical plan

- Plan roughly one session every 3 hours; most people need 2–3 sessions in an 8-hour day.
- Block them on your calendar as recurring, private appointments. Treat them as immovable.
- Keep a spare set of parts at work — the day you forget one is inevitable.
- Label milk with date and time; store in a cooler if there's no dedicated fridge.
- Know your rights: many U.S. employees are protected for reasonable break time and a private, non-bathroom space. Ask HR for the written policy.

The emotional side

Missing your baby is not a sign you made the wrong choice. Most people describe the anticipation as harder than the reality, and the first week as the worst of it.

- Return mid-week if you can — a two or three day first week is much gentler.
- Arrange one photo or update at a set time rather than checking constantly.
- Name the guilt to someone who gets it; it loses power out loud.
- Give yourself a full month before judging how it's going.

Conversation scripts

- **To your manager:** “I’m returning on [date]. I’ll need two 20-minute breaks daily for pumping. Here’s how I plan to cover my responsibilities.”
- **To HR:** “Could you send me the written lactation accommodation policy and the private space location?”
- **To your partner:** “Mornings are the pressure point. Which two tasks will you own every day?”

- **To yourself:** “The first week is not the forecast.”

My return plan

Item	My answer	Done
Return date	_____	
First-week schedule	_____	
Childcare + backup	_____	
Pumping times	_____	
Who handles mornings	_____	
My one-month check-in date	_____	

This guide is general education from Golden Months and does not replace care from your own clinician. Your Golden Months care team can personalize any of it for you. If something feels wrong, call your provider — trust yourself.

