

Work: Questions, Approaches, Who to Talk To, Etc.

Awareness is key when it comes to your work relationships. If it's possible, spend some time trying to ask as many questions and gather as much information before and after you return from maternity leave.

Prior to Maternity Leave:

1. **Survey your landscape.** Try and be fully aware of your surroundings. For example, is there a refrigerator to store breastmilk or a room to pump or a place to clean your equipment? Depending on the landscape, this could change your approach to how you pack for work every day.
2. **Talk to the team.** I found that it was more valuable to the team when I let them know I was still planning to returning to the office. On one occasion, I made sure to visit.
3. **Ask for help.** Both being pregnant and returning to work is a big adjustment. You are taking care of another life, after all. I have never been great about asking for help, but I when I did, I was always more productive.
4. **Ask lots of questions.** The questions can fall before, during or after your pregnancy - any time works really.
5. **Paperwork. There is normally LOTS of paperwork.** If you have paperwork to fill out, remember that it's okay if you don't understand something. Ask questions.
6. **You may have the ability to take off more time prior to your due date.** Ask your HR department.
7. **Depending on the state you live in,** you may be able to arrange and split your maternity leave up in 2-3 week time periods. This timeframe is mandated by the state so you can't be denied how you've chosen to split up your time.
8. If you have really important questions or requests, try and make sure to **get that information in writing.** It can be a great reference when returning to the office.

As an exercise to help with your transition, outline the following information:

1. Your work schedule/your spouse's schedule
2. Your breastfeeding schedule
3. Your baby's schedule
4. The schedule of other people in your family

When returning to work:

1. **Ask your HR department** where you can pump.
2. **Provide HR your tentative schedule.** Work meeting can and do get in the way sometimes. This may be needed if multiple people are using the same space. Also, coordinate with other mothers who might be pumping as well.
3. **Ask other employees questions** that may be in a similar situation this can turn out to be a great resource for you.
4. **If you are traveling,** your HR department may reimburse you for sending milk shipments home.
5. **Make sure your schedule is up-to-date.** If you work in an office, make sure you are clear what your schedule is

6. **Team Communication.** If I had back-to-back meetings, I made sure to always let the team know when I needed to step away, in the rare chance I couldn't block off my schedule.
7. **Ask for help.** If you are feeling overwhelmed during your transition back into the office, ask for help.