

Stephanie G.

I take advantage of the wellness benefits my employer offers. I participated in the Biggest Loser contest that the work gym puts on (I got 4th place and lost 10 pounds) and try and go to the gym classes that they offer at lunch and after work. I try to mix things up with the core and lower body classes and usually some cardio on the stair stepper or the exercise bike. About once or twice a week I also try and make it to an early spin class at 24 hour Fitness. I have a lot of meetings scattered all over the day and night so I can't do a set work out – whatever time I can carve out is the deciding factor for that day. As long as I can find 40 mins a day doing something I'm happy.

The best resource for me was the Sequoia's new parent's group meeting on Wednesdays. They had someone come in and give a talk about nursing and going back to work. She had some good tips such as doing a few trial runs. The week before you go back – put the baby in daycare and try pumping somewhere not at home to see how your body reacts. The nurse who runs the Sequoia wellness center offered up the conference rooms there for the trial run. I did that for a few days just to make sure I remembered to bring everything needed to pump – even things you wouldn't normally think of - for instance, a clean washcloth to put all the parts on - and to see how it was like pumping at a place that wasn't at home. She also gave out sample nursing schedules for a working mom which was helpful. I also had a few co-workers who came back from maternity leave a few weeks before me so I picked their brain for advice.

Advice for moms heading back to work:

- Get everything packed the night before – lunches, snacks, gym bag, laptop, breast pump with all the empty bottles and ice pack, pick out your work clothes, pick out the baby clothes.

- Make a checklist to ensure you grab everything in the morning.

- Get your husband engaged as much as possible in this process and have him do the tasks that he's good at. My husband is terrible at packing and lists so there is no way I had him do the prep work. But he has a more flexible work schedule and takes less time to get ready in the morning so he does day care drop off and usually pick up if I have an evening meeting.

- Nursing at work – be prepared for some surprises. For me, the biggest challenge was being able to reserve the nursing room. We have 3 rooms available with online sign ups and they were unbelievably full. I couldn't stick to a structured schedule because the rooms weren't always available at the times I needed. I work close enough to home that sometimes I just drove home to do it. Also, if you have a job with a lot of meetings, you may need to pump while calling into a phone meeting. Remember to press the mute button!

- Finding time to work out is also a challenge but if you're lucky enough to have access to a gym during lunch time, that will maximize your time before and after work with your baby.

- I put my son on a little bit of a later sleep schedule so that I could spend more time with him after work and hopefully he sleeps in a little later in the morning so I can get ready while he's still sleeping.

- Nothing is impossible – the woman who spoke at the Sequoia's group went on business trips while nursing and mailed her breast milk overnight back home.

It really does get easier as time goes on. After a while I stopped the checklist because it became second nature.