

How should I approach returning to work after parental leave?

Returning to work after parental leave comes with many sacrifices and mixed feelings. Whether you are a new mum or new dad, returning to work after being away and caring for your new child can be challenging. Therefore, it's important to know your options and have a plan to ensure and alleviate any additional stressors.

BE CLEAR ABOUT YOUR RETURN TO WORK GOALS

Some questions to ask yourself include:

- How many hours can I return for? Can I gradually ease back into a full time working week?
- What will my duties be? If I am only returning to part time hours, how will my job duties change or be modified?
- What flexibility does my organisation offer me? Can I work from home or use teleconferencing facilities?
- Is there a possibility to job share with the organisation and my team?

After you have decided what you want, you should ask HR "what are my options?" Arrange a meeting four to eight weeks before your start date and discuss these options with HR and/or your manager, ensuring you have ample time to negotiate and "bed down" the final arrangements.

TIPS FOR THE RETURN

- Time efficiency and planning. Who will drop off/pick up at day-care? Do you need to pack lunches/pack a bag each day? Who will be responsible for each task?
- Prioritise. Get used to “to do list’s” for both work and home. What chores need to get done each day? What can wait until my day off or the weekend?
- Learn to communicate effectively. What needs to be discussed now with my partner and what can wait for another time?
- Be familiar with the new arrangements. Before your first day, practice the day and the routine. Does it work or does it need modification?

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

- If you are unwell physically or psychologically, ask for support or access your Employee Assistance Program if necessary
- Ensure you get a good night’s sleep
- Have a good diet and consider meal planning in advance to avoid shortcuts like take-away foods
- Build exercise into your routine – could you go to the gym at lunch-time or walk home from work?
- Be kind to yourself – remind yourself of all the benefits of being at work for you and your family, what your daily achievements are (no matter how small e.g. washing up the dishes is a good one!), and remind yourself what a great role model you are being to your child and family
- Be patient with yourself, embarking on a new lifestyle takes time, practice and perseverance; remind yourself what a good job you are doing everyday by just being there.

We would like to thank Centre for Corporate Health (cfch.com.au) for their assistance in the compilation of this factsheet.



The Corporate Mental Health Alliance (CMHAA) is a group of Australian businesses dedicated to providing mentally healthy workplaces for their people.

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE VISIT:

Website: cmhaa.org.au

LinkedIn: [Corporate Mental Health Alliance Australia](https://www.linkedin.com/company/corporate-mental-health-alliance-australia)



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