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What to wear to work after having a baby

By Jamie Noguchi

After wearing casual clothes all of the time, finding outfits that will look great when you go back to work can be stressful. Here's how to look good if you're a mom heading back to the office after a hiatus.



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prefer.

What to wear it with: Opt for rolled-up jeans and a T-shirt on casual Fridays, and a pencil skirt, slim pants or wide trousers with a camisole or blouse the rest of the week.

2. The perfect pants

What to look for: A timeless, flattering and universal fit. "When your pants fall straight from the hips you get a clean, long and lean line, which makes you look 10 pounds trimmer!" says Nadler.

What to wear them with: Pair pants with a blazer and cami, or with separates such as a blouse or sweater set.

3. Skinny jeans

What to look for: Dark-rinse **skinny jeans** are versatile and look great with most tops, but if you're not feeling ready to rock the look (though it's easier than you may fear, thanks to Spandex and elastane-blend denim), opt for a straight, slim cut instead.

What to wear them with: Jeans can be dressed up with a blazer and blouse or dressed down with simple tee. Or go prim and pretty with a cardigan twin set.

10 essentials for moms returning to the office

"Don't overwhelm your budget," advises Nadler. "Invest in good core staples [that classic suit or little black dress, for example] so you can maximize your wardrobe by pairing them with different supporting pieces. For **busy moms**, it's nice to look into your closet and know everything works together," says Nadler.

Break your shopping into multiple trips to make it more manageable, if you prefer. And always shop with a list so you don't get sidetracked. Here is Nadler's list of the 10 wardrobe items every career mom needs:

1. A tailored blazer

What to look for: A dark neutral colour -- such as black, charcoal or navy -- with a tailored fit and made in a classic fabric for year-round wear. (Don't go too heavy or too light.) The blazer can have one button or two -- whatever you

4. A pencil skirt

What to look for: A flattering, but not tight fit. "A tone-on-tone pinstripe can be especially pretty," says Nadler.

What to wear it with: Pair a pencil skirt with a fitted blazer, a sweater set or a tucked-in button-down shirt or blouse.

5. A little black dress (LBD)

What to look for: "Something classic: sleeveless, in a V or rounded neck," says Nadler. "And it doesn't have to be black -- just a dark neutral you can mix with other pieces."

What to wear it with: Throw a fitted blazer or **cardigan overtop**.

6. Leather jacket

What to look for: A slim-fitting, lightweight jacket that can be layered under your winter coat and that you can move about comfortably in. "Blazer, motorcycle or mandarin collar styles make a bold statement at the office," says Nadler.

What to wear it with: Keep the look professional by pairing your leather jacket with an LBD. Or opt for a pencil skirt or trousers with a blouse or camisole.

7. T-shirts

What to look for: Inexpensive, layering-friendly tees that go from office to weekend with ease. Stock your dresser with neutrals, bright colours and fun patterns for variety.

What to wear them with: A T-shirt looks great under a blazer, leather jacket or even a faux-fur vest on casual days, and paired with skinny jeans or trousers.

8. Dressy tops

What to look for: Silk camisoles, trendy blouses, button-down shirts, faux-wrap shirts and delicate cardigans -- and remember to experiment with colours and prints.

What to wear them with: Layer tops under wool or leather blazers paired with a pencil skirt, or opt for suit pants or skinny jeans and a jacket.

9. A quality handbag

What to look for: "Invest in the best-quality leather **handbag** you can afford," advises Nadler. "When you buy smartly, it gives you quality and wearability." Look for a neutral colour, as well as proportions that can hold what you need, but are scaled to your body size. *Tip:* Pebbled leather hides wear and scratching the best.

What to wear it with: Everything!

10. Pumps or other classic office shoes

What to look for: Neutral is the way to go, but typically black is best. The heel height is up to you, although stacked heels tend to give confidence. Once you've got neutral shoes covered, feel free to add some colour to **your shoe collection**.

What to wear them with: Again, everything!

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Are you returning to work after a year of maternity leave or several years of stay-at-home motherhood? Read on for expert tips (and a shopping list) that will help you get back your fashion groove.

What to wear to work if you're returning from maternity leave

If you're going back to [work after maternity](#) or parental leave, start by refreshing your existing career wardrobe with chic accessories. Also replace basics that no longer fit well, says Toronto-based fashion consultant Erin Nadler, owner of [betterstyled.com](#).

"But don't go crazy when back-to-work shopping," she warns. "Think about pieces that give you the most mix-and-match potential for the least amount of money."

New moms can take a year or more to settle into their postbaby body, so it's not worth investing in high-end pieces at this stage. Once you feel that your body has reached its set point, start building a core mix-and-match wardrobe.

What to wear to work if you've been out of the workplace for several years

If you're returning to work after several years away from the workforce, feel free to jump into building that core, mix-and-match career wardrobe from scratch. Start by getting yourself up to speed with current [career wardrobe](#) trends, says Nadler.

"Familiarize yourself with [fashion trends](#)," she suggests. "Read fashion magazines and pay attention to the ads, too. They can keep you abreast of general trends like colour, cut, fabric and style, but also help steer you toward a style or brands you might like," she explains.

Next, consider how those trends fit into your new workplace. "What's your new corporate culture like? Is it business, business casual or casual? And if it's business casual, what does that entail?" asks Nadler. "These days, business casual encompasses a wide range of dressing: for some, jeans and blazer; for others, a jacket with a pant or dress. Decode your workplace's dress

code and make bigger wardrobe decisions off of that."

Finally, chat up your professional friends to see what they're wearing to work and ask one of them to take you shopping. Or consider hiring a wardrobe consultant whose professional acumen can save you a lot of time and headaches.

Get the right bra

Kick off your wardrobe revamp with a professional bra fitting. "The **right-size bra** will make you feel more confident and give you a nicer, smoother and curvier silhouette. Not to mention, it can help define your waist and make the most of your new career wardrobe," says Nadler.

So don't save this task for last. Wear your new, professionally fitted bras when clothes shopping.