

Interviews with Male Employees Who Took Childcare Leave and Their Supervisors at Yakult Honsha Co., Ltd.

Our Initiatives

At Yakult Headquarters, we believe that promoting diverse work styles and diversity is essential for fostering innovation, and we actively encourage male employees to take childcare leave (hereafter referred to as “paternity leave”).

Recently, more fathers have expressed values such as “I want to fulfill both work and parenting responsibilities, and enjoy both,” “I want to closely watch my child’s precious growth during this unique time,” “I want to support my wife after childbirth,” and “Taking a break from work gives me a new perspective that will benefit my future career.” As a result, more male employees are actively taking childcare leave.

Paternity Leave Interviews

We interviewed male employees who took childcare leave and their supervisors. We asked the employees about their impressions after taking leave and what preparations they made. We also asked their supervisors about how they supported their team members in taking leave and how they fostered an environment that promotes paternity leave within the department.

Interviewed Employees

- Home Delivery Sales Department,
Home Delivery Planning Section
Employee who took leave: Takuya Tateishi, Senior Staff
Supervisor: Hisataka Omori, Manager
- Hyogo Miki Plant, Quality Control Section
Employee who took leave: Yasunobu Imahori, Assistant Manager
Supervisor: Masayuki Tanaka, Manager

Note: Department and job titles are as of the interview date (December 2022).

Interview with employee and supervisor:

Takuya Tateishi, Senior Staff,
Home Delivery Sales Department,
Home Delivery Planning Section

Reason for taking childcare leave



■ To support my wife and spend quality time with my child

When my wife was pregnant, I learned that a senior male colleague had taken childcare leave and that the company had started initiatives to ascertain the intention of male employees to take leave when their child was born.

Influenced by these factors, I decided to take childcare leave not only to support my wife but also to spend meaningful time with my child.

Preparations before taking childcare leave

■ Reconfirming tasks only I knew before the start of leave

Since my team changed in April, **I consulted with the team leader and members three months before starting leave, and then with my supervisor.** Because I was focused on handling new tasks, I began the full handover only one month before the leave started.

What I focused on was confirming that there were no tasks that only I knew and could handle before the start of leave. Fortunately, since I had just joined the new team, there were few such tasks.

In practice, **I worked on my tasks together with team members and shared the background and future approach.**

Tateishi's schedule before taking childcare leave

3 months before taking leave	Consulted with team leader and members in advance;
One month before taking leave	Handed over tasks (confirmed there were no tasks only I knew of and could handle)
Childbirth	Birth of first child
Start of childcare leave	Began childcare leave 25 days after childbirth (14 days)

Challenges during childcare



■The physical and mental burden was greater than expected

Holding the baby to stop crying, changing diapers, and bathing were all more physically demanding than I expected. Especially when the baby wouldn't stop crying, it became mentally exhausting. I now fondly remember walking around the house singing various songs.

My wife had to breastfeed in addition to these tasks, so experiencing childcare firsthand made me realize how physically and mentally demanding it truly is.

Message to those planning to take childcare leave

■Childcare leave is a great opportunity to prioritize family

When I reported the birth of my child, my supervisor told me, "Colleagues are temporary, but family is for life. That's why you should prioritize your family from now on." Those words still resonate with me.

Taking paternity leave makes your wife happy and deepens your love for your child. I believe paternity leave is one of the best opportunities to prioritize family.

Interview with Supervisor (Hisataka Omori, Manager)

How did you accommodate your subordinate's childcare leave?



Since I also took childcare leave, I didn't see it as some sort of special treatment and told my team member, "Go ahead and take it." I shared my own experience of how it allowed me to focus on childcare.

Because we regularly share information in weekly team meetings, we were able to smoothly handle handovers and role assignments.

Even after the leave, team members are aware that Tateishi has a small child, so support systems for sudden absences are in place.

Interview with employee and supervisor:

Yasunobu Imahori, Assistant Manager,
Quality Control Section, Hyogo Miki Plant

Reason for taking childcare leave

■Decided to take leave for second child due to severe sleep deprivation during first child's newborn stage



During our first child's newborn stage, both my wife and I suffered from severe sleep deprivation, so I wanted to take childcare leave for our second child. Other reasons included the lack of parental support due to distance and the fact that my wife could not go out for about two weeks after giving birth. The understanding within my department and the culture that made it easy to take leave were also decisive factors.

Preparations before taking childcare leave

■Consulted with my supervisor six months before and prepared systematically!

I consulted with my supervisor about six months before taking leave.

Since our department already had a system where members supported each other in daily tasks, the handover went surprisingly smoothly.

Imahori's schedule before taking childcare leave

6 months before taking leave	●	Consulted with supervisor
2 months before taking leave	●	Supervisor informed team members; started information sharing and handover
One month before taking leave	●	Requested detailed coordination and proxy attendance at meetings
Start of childcare leave Childbirth	●	Began childcare leave two days before childbirth (34 days)



Benefits of taking childcare leave

■Seeing my eldest son grow after the birth of his younger brother
During my wife's hospitalization and after childbirth, I took charge of household chores. Although I had done individual chores before, handling all of them together was a first for me, and a valuable experience. With our first child, both my wife and I struggled with sleep deprivation, but this time, by alternating childcare duties at night, we were able to secure sleep for each other.

After our second son was born, our eldest developed a sense of responsibility as an older brother and suddenly became more mature. I was delighted to witness this change up close.



Message to those planning to take childcare leave

■Childcare is full of unknowns.

Be there to support your family, even for a short time!

With our first child, both my wife and I were overwhelmed by uncertainties and stress. That's why I believe even taking just one week of childcare leave to be with your family can make a big difference.

Interview with Supervisor (Masayuki Tanaka, Manager)

How did you accommodate your subordinate's childcare leave?

What was your reaction when you were consulted about taking leave?



■Childcare leave is essential for achieving work-life balance

In our section, three male employees took childcare leave in FY2021 and three more in FY2022 (as of December). As we promote work style reforms to achieve work-life balance, we recognize that paternity leave is essential for employees and their families. Therefore, when consulted, we actively encourage them to take leave.

What preparations did you make?

■Building a system where multiple people can perform and follow up on unit tasks

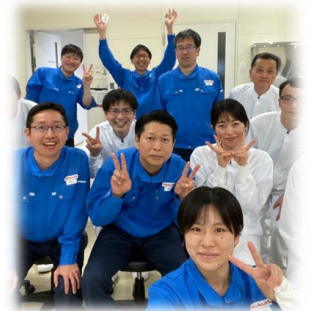
Since FY2021, our section has promoted multi-skilled operations, enabling multiple members to perform and follow up on unit tasks. Two months before the leave, we inform team members and share information about the upcoming leave. We also start preparations early, including handing over the employee's tasks to others, to minimize any impact on operations.

Did taking childcare leave bring positive changes to the team?

■Strengthening collaboration and fostering a culture that makes childcare leave easier to take

By taking childcare leave, employees can spend this rare and precious time peacefully with their family, cooperating as a couple. After returning, they can approach work with a refreshed mindset, which also boosts motivation.

In the workplace, when team members cooperate and provide support during childcare leave to ensure work progress is not affected, it strengthens collaboration and fosters a culture where taking leave is easier.



※Masks were removed for photography.