

HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDELINES FOR NEW AND EXPECTANT MOTHERS

What do we mean by “New or Expectant Mother”?

This phrase means a worker who is pregnant, who has given birth within the previous six months, or who is breast-feeding.

What are the risks to new and expectant mothers associated with work?

The main risks to new or expectant mothers associated with work are:

- Accidents due to physical changes in the body.
- Harm to the unborn or breast feeding child from chemical or biological agents.
- Miscarriage, premature birth or low birth weight from extremes in the working environment.

Remember, pregnancy is not an illness and the majority of new and expectant mothers who work, do so with no adverse effects on them or their children.

What hazards present increased risk to new and expectant mothers?

Many of the specific hazards that present an increased risk to new and expectant mothers are usually only found in certain higher risk working environments, e.g. working with ionising radiation, biological agents, toxic chemicals like Mercury, lead.

More general hazards that need to be considered because they are present in many work environments are manual handling, shocks and vibration, heat, fatigue.

Arrangements and Responsibilities

The arrangements and responsibilities relating to New and Expectant Mothers at Work are as follows.

Managers are responsible for:

- Discussing the risks to pregnant colleagues in the workplace using guidance in this section when the colleague informs them they are pregnant.
- Reviewing the risk assessment with the colleague regularly as the pregnancy progresses.
- Ensuring action is taken to remove, prevent or control the exposure to identified hazards if problems arise as the pregnancy progresses.
- Seeking further advice if an expectant mother informs them that she has a complicated pregnancy via your People Manager or the Doctor.

Colleagues are responsible for:

- Notifying their manager about pregnancy.
- Informing Manager if any issues or health problems arise that may affect their ability to work or carry out certain tasks.
- Following any information, instruction and training given by Manager.

People Managers are responsible for:

- Supporting Managers with resolving issues that arise for new and expectant mothers.

Conduct a one-to-one meeting with the new or expectant Mother to go through the following.

Situation where hazard is encountered or could arise:

- Working when pregnant or breast feeding

Possible Risks

- Injuries due to postural, shape and ligament changes affecting manual handling ability as pregnancy progresses.
- Premature birth, miscarriage or low birth weight due to fatigue.
- Fatigue/stress due to reduced heat tolerance.
- Premature birth or miscarriage through regular exposure to bumps to the abdomen or whole body vibration in certain working environments.

Recommended precautions that colleagues with the support of managers should follow.

- Reduce the need for manual handling as far as practical, be aware of changing ability to lift and carry as the pregnancy progresses.
- Follow the correct manual handling techniques you were trained to follow at induction.
- Avoid situations where the abdomen is exposed to bumps or whole body vibration e.g. Fork lift trucks, confined areas where the abdomen keeps being bumped against objects, manual handling of large objects.
- Take regular breaks and appropriate rest.
- Discuss, with your Manager, amending hours/workload if necessary, as pregnancy progresses and on return to work, when required.
- Avoid working in situations where excessive heat is encountered. Drink plenty of fluids.
- If you are concerned that your work may be affecting your pregnancy, ask your Doctor or Midwife for their advice. Let your manager know the outcome of these discussions, and they may seek further advice from Occupational Health.

Maternity Leave- Health and Safety

Persons/Groups at Risk

- Pregnant or breast feeding colleagues.

Review Risk Assessment when:

- When colleague notifies Manager that she is pregnant.
- If complications occur in pregnancy.
- At regular 1:1 with your Manager as pregnancy progresses (i.e. change in shape, ability).
- If accident/incident occurs which shows precautions were followed but were inadequate.