

## PREGNANT AT WORK

An employer needs to assess the risks that might harm any of their employees and to do what is reasonably practical to control those risks.

*(Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999)*

Where women of childbearing age are employed, the risk assessment must include risks specific to new and expectant mothers. This is irrespective of whether the employer knows that they have a new or expectant mother working for them.

The types of hazards that should be considered are physical, biological and chemical agents, work processes and working conditions. Many of these hazards are likely to be covered by specific health and safety regulations, for example the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (COSHH). Information on the reduction of these hazards is available in the various Codes of Practice already available through the Health & Safety Division.

An employer will need to keep these risk assessments for new and expectant mothers under review.

When an employer has been told in writing that a worker is pregnant, has given birth in the previous six months or is breast feeding the certain actions must be taken. As a general rule the employer should first consider removing any hazard to her that has been identified or prevent exposure to it. If however, there is still a significant risk to the safety or health of a new or expectant mother at her work – a risk that goes beyond the level to be expected outside the workplace – then an employer must take the following further steps to remove her from the risk:

Step 1: temporarily adjust her working conditions and/or hours of work; or if it is not reasonable to do this or it would not avoid the risk then

Step 2: offer her suitable alternative work if any is available; or if it is not feasible, then the employer must

Step 3: suspend her from work (give her leave on full pay) for as long as it is necessary to protect her safety or that of her child.

When notified that a woman is pregnant, has given birth in the previous six months or is breast feeding the original risk assessment must be consulted to ascertain whether any risks specific to a new or expectant mother have been identified. Based on the initial risk assessment it will be necessary to carry out a risk assessment specific to the employee, taking into account any medical advice their doctor has provided on either the Med 3 or MAT B1.

## RISK ASSESSMENT

**For a woman who is pregnant, breast feeding or has recently given birth.**

Name:

Department:

Job title:

Expected date of childbirth:

Person conducting risk assessment:

Date:

Review date:

In all cases, if a risk is identified it will be necessary to ascertain whether: the risk can be removed; a change the working conditions will remove the risk; alternative work can be provided; or whether it will be necessary to suspend on full pay if the risk cannot be removed.

<b>Class</b>	<b>Agent</b>	<b>Yes/ No</b>	<b>Control measures in place or action to be taken</b>
<b>Physical</b>	Vibration		
	Noise		
	Ionising radiation		
	Non-ionising radiation (EM fields)		
	Extreme temperature		
	Manual handling		
	Driving		
	Overseas travel		
	Movements/posture		
<b>Biological Agents</b>	Any agent hazard group 2, 3 and 4		
	Agents known to cause abortion or physical damage (e.g. rubella, toxoplasmosis)		
<b>Chemical Agents</b>	Substances labelled R40, R45, R46, R49, R61, R63 and R68		
	Mercury and its compounds		
	Antimitotic (cytotoxic) drugs (that inhibit cell division)		
	Chemical agents of known and dangerous		

	absorption through the skin. Include some pesticides		
	Carbon monoxide		
	Lead and its compounds		
<b>Working conditions</b>	Resting facilities		
	Hygiene facilities		
	Storage facilities		
	Mental & physical fatigue and working hours		
	Occupational stress		
	Passive smoking		
	Work with DSE		
	Working alone		
	Travel		
	Violence		
	Protective clothing		
	Other		

Where legislative guidelines exist these must be consulted whilst reviewing the risk assessment. Where a doctor, midwife or health visitor has indicated that there may be special consideration or requirement, the worker should be referred to the Occupational Health Service for additional advice.

### **FURTHER INFORMATION**

New and Expectant Mothers at Work: A Guide for Employers HSG122 (second edition) HSE Books 2002 ISBN 0 7176 2583 4

Working Safely with Ionising Radiation: Guidance for Expectant or Breastfeeding Mothers INDG334 HSE Books 2001