



## H & S Guidance - Maternity

### INTRODUCTION

The health and safety implications of new or expectant mothers can be adequately addressed by normal health and safety management procedures. By assessing risks to all employees (including new and expectant mothers) and doing what is reasonably practicable to control those risks you will comply with both general and specific legal duties in this area. Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 if you cannot avoid a risk by other means you will need to:-

i) make changes to working conditions or hours,

ii) offer suitable alternative work,

or, if that is not possible

iii) give the worker paid leave for as long as necessary to protect her health or safety or that of her child.

### WHAT ARE THE HAZARDS?

Those of most relevance in the **local authority-enforced sector** can include the following:-

**NB The full table in booklet HS (G) 122 ('New and Expectant Mothers at Work' - See References/Further Details) contains a comprehensive listing.**

#### **List of agents/working conditions      Risk Precautions**

##### **PHYSICAL**

Shocks, vibration, movement	During driving; excessive movements; heavy physical work	Avoid work likely to involve uncomfortable whole body vibration or shocks/jolts to abdomen
Manual handling	Pregnant workers are especially at risk due to hormonal changes to ligaments and postural changes to cope with increasing abdominal size	Reduce manual handling risks for all workers; address specific needs of the worker and/or provide handling aids



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Extremes of cold or heat Less tolerance of heat stress (although risks reduce after birth) - may faint more readily

Ensure comfortable thermal/environmental conditions

## List of agents/working conditions

## Risk

## Precautions

Movements, postures, travelling, fatigue (physical and mental)

- Fatigue may result in miscarriage, premature birth and low birth weight
- Stress may lead to raised blood pressure

- Appropriate hours of work and volume /pacing of work (where possible with some employee control)
- Availability of suitable seating. Enhanced rest breaks
- Adjustments to workstations or work procedures

Dexterity, agility, co-ordination speed of movement, reach and balance may be impaired

Biological agents/hazards

- Hepatitis B, HIV etc.
- Animal care e.g. possible toxoplasmosis, psittacosis, Listeria (e.g. in food workers)

<sty sys-list><sty sys-item>Depends on the risk assessment but may include physical containment, hygiene measures etc.

## CHEMICAL AGENTS

Substances that may cause:-

- irreversible effects
- cancer
- heritable genetic damage
- harm/possible harm to the

Actual risk can only be determined following a risk assessment

Except lead and asbestos, such substances fall within the scope of COSHH



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unborn  
child/breastfed  
child

Some pesticides that  
may be absorbed  
through the skin

HSE Guidance  
Note EH40  
'Occupational  
Exposure Limits'  
identifies such  
substances with  
'Sk'. Risk depends  
on the way it is  
being used as well  
as its dangerous  
properties

- Precautions to prevent skin contact.
- Compliance with relevant provisions of the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986.

### **WORKING CONDITIONS**

Work with  
Display  
Screen  
Equipment  
(DSE)

The HSE has  
stated that  
concerns about  
radiation  
emissions and  
possible effects on  
pregnant women  
are unfounded

None required but to allay  
unnecessary stress and anxiety  
opportunity might be given to  
discuss concerns with someone  
adequately informed of current  
authoritative scientific concerns  
with someone adequately  
informed of current authoritative  
scientific information and advice.

Work with  
display  
screen  
equipment  
(DSE) Cont'd

Postural Effects

These can be dealt with by  
suitable workstation  
assessments, where necessary,  
and appropriate adjustments as  
required.

### **ASPECTS OF PREGNANCY THAT MAY AFFECT WORK**

The following table sets out some features of pregnancy which you may wish to take into account in considering your arrangements for pregnant and breast-feeding workers, although you are not required by law to do so.

#### **ASPECTS OF PREGNANCY**

#### **FACTORS IN WORK**



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Morning Sickness	Early shift work
	Exposure to nauseating/strong smells
Backache	Posture/manual handling/standing
Varicose veins	Standing/sitting
Haemorrhoids	Working in hot conditions
Frequency of visits to toilets	Difficulty in leaving job/site of work
Increasing size	Use of protective clothing. Work in confined areas/workspaces. Manual handling
Tiredness	Overtime/Evening work
Balance	Problems of working on slippery, wet, etc. surfaces

**NB** Dexterity, agility, co-ordination, speed of movement and reach may be impaired as the pregnancy progresses.

Booklet HS(G)122 contains the full table. See below in references.

### **REFERENCES/FURTHER DETAILS**

- 1. New and expectant mothers at Work - a guide for employers Booklet HS(G) 122(HSE)  
ISBN 0-7176-0826-3 (£9.50)**
- 2. Infection Risks to New and Expectant Mothers in the Workplace' - A guide for employer  
Booklet C100(HSE) ISBN 0-7176-1360-7 (£10.50)**
- 3. A guide for new and expectant mothers. INDG 373 (HSE)**