

MATERNITY

(See also : [Risk Assessment\(68\)](#); [Ergonomics\(25\)](#); [Manual Handling\(52\)](#); [Radiation\(64\)](#); [Carcinogens\(12\)](#); [COSHH\(19\)](#); [Display Screen Equipment\(20\)](#))

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 <u>specific</u> needs of the worker and/or provide handling aids
Extremes of cold or heat	Less tolerance of heat stress (although risks reduce after birth) - may faint more readily	Ensure comfortable thermal/environmental conditions

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List of agents/working conditions	Risk	Precautions
Movements, postures, travelling, fatigue (physical and mental)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fatigue may result in miscarriage, premature birth and low birth weight • Stress may lead to raised blood pressure • Dexterity, agility, co-ordination speed of movement, reach and balance may be impaired 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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
Biological agents/hazards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hepatitis B, HIV etc. • Animal care e.g. possible toxoplasmosis, psittacosis, • Listeria (e.g. in food workers) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 unborn child/ breastfed child	Actual risk can only be determined following a risk assessment	Except lead and asbestos, such substances fall within the scope of COSHH
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Precautions to prevent skin contact. • Compliance with relevant provisions of the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986.

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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.

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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
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.

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CHECKLIST - MATERNITY

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| 1. Have you carried out an assessment of the risks to new and expectant mothers? | YES | NO |
| 2. Have you controlled any risks as far as is reasonably practicable? | YES | NO |
| 3. If you have been unable to avoid risks to new or expectant mothers, have you:- | | |
| i) made changes to working condition or hours? | YES | NO |
| ii) offered suitable alternative work | YES | NO |
| or, | | |
| where these are not possible | | |
| iii) given the worker paid leave for as long as necessary to protect her health or safety or that of her child | YES | NO |

REFERENCES/FURTHER DETAILS

- *1. Booklet HS(G) 122 'New and expectant mothers at Work - a guide for employers (HSE) ISBN 0-7176-2583-4
- *2. Booklet C100 'Infection Risks to New and Expectant Mothers in the Workplace' - A guide for employers (HSE) ISBN 0-7176-1360-7

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- * Available to view by prior arrangement at Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council, Environmental Health Services, Council House, Coton Road, Nuneaton. CV11 5AA
 - ** Free copy available from Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council at the above address.

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