



Managers' guide to health and safety for new and expectant mothers

The Law

1. The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require a specific risk assessment to be completed for new and expectant mothers.

Risk assessments during pregnancy

2. Managers must complete an expectant mother's risk assessment form once an employee tells them that she is pregnant. This risk assessment must then be reviewed at regular stages, and possibly revised when the employee reaches half way through the pregnancy (at 20-26 weeks). See the maternity risk assessment flowchart and the managers' action guide for more details.
3. To prepare for the meeting, managers should consider possible additional measures that the employee may need to protect their health and safety (H&S) during their pregnancy. Make sure you discuss these issues with your employee and agree suitable control measures. You must do this in addition to following Human Resources (HR) policies and guidance.

Considerations when completing an expectant mother risk assessment

4. Dexterity, agility, co-ordination, speed of movement and reach may all alter as the pregnancy progresses. Managers must review previous risk assessments that relate to the employee and her work, such as display screen equipment, manual handling, hazardous substances and lone working assessments. The risk assessments should be revised to take account of the physical changes linked to pregnancy.
5. The specific areas / issues relating to an expectant mother's risk assessment that you need to consider are listed in table 1 on page 2.
6. For more guidance, check out these websites...
 - The Health and Safety Executive's New and Expectant Mothers' webpages - <http://www.hse.gov.uk/mothers/index.htm>
 - NHS Choices - pregnancy and baby guide - <http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/pages/pregnancy-and-baby-care.aspx>.

Table 1. Possible issues relating to an expectant mothers' risk assessment

Aspects of pregnancy	Work factors to consider	Possible control measures
Morning sickness	Early shift work. Exposure to nauseating smells. Need to eat/ drink frequently.	Use of flexi time; adjust start time. Relocation to a different work location, site or establishment. Frequent break times.
Backache	Standing, manual handling, posture.	Ability to alter tasks/ positions. Complete a workstation assessment. Temporary change to workload / tasks allocated.
Frequent visits to toilet	Difficulty in leaving job or site of work.	Temporary changes to task or location. Planning of work to allow for regular breaks.
Increasing size	Use of protective clothing. Work in confined areas. Manual handling.	Provision of larger clothing. Temporary alteration of tasks. Provision of assistance with tasks. Manual handling risk assessment completed.
Tiredness	Overtime. Evening work.	Regular break times. Changes to work patterns.
Balance	Problems of working on slippery, wet surfaces. Extreme weather conditions. Working at height.	Sensible clothing and shoes. Change of tasks to eliminate risk where possible. Parking closer to work.
Comfort	Problems of working in tight workspaces.	Change of tasks to eliminate risk where possible.
Inability to lift/ carry	Changes in the ability to carry heavy or bulky loads. Problems with balance.	Manual handling risk assessment. Provision of lifting aids, Elimination of tasks which involve lifting.

Maternity leave

- Managers should keep in touch with the employee whilst they are on maternity leave. Keeping in touch is a good way of reducing any possible stressors associated with the return to work.

Returning to Work

- Once a return date has been set, managers must arrange a meeting with the employee to complete a new mother's risk assessment with them. This should be done in consultation with the employee **before** she returns to her normal work activities. The specific areas/ issues that need to be considered during the risk assessment process are listed in table 2.
- Due to the employee's prolonged period of absence, managers will also need to review any other risk assessments relating to their work activities with them. Any new risk assessments, safety procedures or protective measures implemented during the employee's absence must be explained.

Table 2. Possible issues relating to a new mother's risk assessment.

Aspects to consider	Work factors to consider	Possible control measures
Breast feeding	Access to private welfare facilities. Manual handling. Fit and comfort of work wear/ PPE.	Access to a hygienic private room for expressing milk. Facilities for washing equipment. Storage of milk in a temperature controlled manner. Building break times into the working day. Completing a manual handling assessment. Provision of suitably fitting work wear/ personal protective equipment.
Stress	Reintroduction into work. Changes to work.	Re-induction into team. Allowing an agreed settling in period. Completion of the individual stress action plan. Refer to occupational health if appropriate.
Post natal depression		Information can be found on the NHS website . Refer to Occupational Health service, if appropriate. Complete an individual stress action plan.