

New and Expectant Mothers

Being pregnant or a new mother does not generally prevent a woman from working. That said it is important that, in conjunction with their employer, they help to consider the risks that may exist in some workplaces that could affect the health and safety of the woman and/or her child. This information sheet aims to provide you with specific information about the steps that will be taken to help look after your health, safety and welfare during and immediately after a pregnancy.

It is important that expectant mothers inform their managers of their pregnancy at an early stage. This notification will trigger a review of the risk assessments associated with your particular work activities and may result in a specific individual risk assessment being undertaken. It is important that any special measures identified as a result of the risk assessment process are adhered to.

If you have notified your line manager of your intention to return to work within six months of the birth of the baby, or that you are still breastfeeding then the original assessment(s) will need to be reviewed again.

Every pregnancy is different and personal so it is not possible to outline specific risks in an information sheet such as this, however the following offers a generic list of the factors that would be considered within a maternity risk assessment. The level of risk could well vary depending on the stage of pregnancy.

Some of the more common factors might be:

- lifting/carrying heavy loads;
- standing or sitting still for long lengths of time;
- exposure to infectious;
- exposure to lead;
- exposure to toxic chemicals;
- work-related stress;
- workstations and posture;
- exposure to radioactive material;
- threat of violence in the workplace;
- long working hours;
- excessively noisy workplaces.



As a result of the risk assessment (and taking into account any health information provided by your GP) it is possible that there may be some temporary changes to your working arrangements. Such changes can include:

- adjustments to your hours of work;
- alternative work locations or perhaps;
- alternative work activities.

Other considerations

Health and Safety Executive guidance encourages employers to implement a number of support mechanisms to help expectant and new mothers. In conversation with your line manager there can be discussions around the following topics:

- **Rest breaks** - As a new or expectant mother, you are likely to need to go to the toilet more often, as it is important to drink plenty of fluids both while you are pregnant and when you are breastfeeding, it can also be a very tiring time. With this in mind there may be a need to agree timing and flexibility of rest and toilet breaks with your line manager. If your work involves being away from the office on a regular basis there may be a need to identify/arrange specific toilet access.
- **Work at nights** – If you are involved in night shift work then, in the main, there is no reason why this cannot continue but if your GP or midwife has provided a medical certificate stating that you should not continue to work nights, then your line manager will discuss alternative work arrangements with you.
- **Breastfeeding** – If it is your decision to continue to breastfeed when you return to work then you need to discuss this with your line manager. The Council will endeavour to support your desire and will discuss with you arrangements that will permit you to do this. This may involve a change in your work pattern to allow this to take place. Ideally you should provide your manager with written notification, before you return, that you are breastfeeding so that early discussion and suitable arrangements can be made. The risk assessment review prompted by this discussion will look for any specific risks such as working with organic mercury, working with radioactive materials or exposure to lead.
- **Expressing Breast Milk** – If circumstances are such that you are likely to want to express milk then you should discuss this with your line manager. Every effort will be made to provide suitable private, healthy and safe facilities for nursing mothers to express and store milk. It is to be noted that toilets are not suitable for this purpose.

General Risk Assessment Form (New & Expectant Mothers)						
Activity/ Location:					New Lambtonshire Council	
Aide Memoir ✓ - present and considered, X considered not to be present						
Uniform	Radiation	Temperature	Health	Lone Working	Hou	
Weather	Environment	Violence	Workload	Workplace/Location	Fire	
Physical Effort	Movement	Others	Slip/trip/fall	Emergency Contact	Heig	

Other Resources

AS4 – General Risk Assessment
 AS36 – New and Expectant Mothers
 HSF34 – Maternity Risk Assessment Form
 Online Training – Maternity Risk Assessments