

Chapter 26

New and expectant mothers

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Version

The table below shows the history of the document and the changes that were made at each version.

Version	Date	Summary of changes
1.0	27 Jan 2010	Initial issue
1.2	9 th August 2013	Review

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Pregnancy is a natural part of life; many women work while they are pregnant and return to work while they are breast feeding. Working conditions generally considered acceptable may no longer be so during pregnancy and while breastfeeding. This chapter will help identify responsibilities, hazards and control measures to help manage new or expectant mothers.

2. Definitions

- 2.1 New or expectant mother is an employee;
- Who is pregnant;
 - Who has given birth within the previous six months;
 - Who is breastfeeding;

3. Key responsibilities

3.1 Line managers should ensure:

- That a specific risk assessment is carried out for new or expectant mothers in their area of responsibility.
- That this should be regularly monitored and reviewed to take into account possible risks that may occur at different stages of pregnancy, initially every 6 weeks but as pregnancy develops more frequently.

3.2 Employees should;

- Inform in writing, their line manager if they are pregnant, at the earliest convenience.
- Use all control measures identified in the risk assessment to ensure their continued protection.

- Notify the line manager in writing if breast feeding beyond six months, so that the measures required under the risk assessment can be reviewed and continued where appropriate.

4. Risk assessment considerations

- 4.1 In the case of new or expectant mothers, where the risk assessment shows there is a risk which cannot be adequately controlled, line managers must alter her working conditions or hours of work. If this is not possible or still fails to manage the risk, the employee must be suspended from work for as long as is necessary to avoid such risk. The suspension must be on full pay and The Hackney Learning Trust Human Resources Department should be consulted for further guidance.
- 4.2 A table of specified hazards along with the risks and ways to avoid them is contained in paragraph 5. This list is not exhaustive and covers only those risks likely to be encountered within schools. Further information and advice may be obtained from Education Health and Safety team.

5. Further Help and Assistance

- 5.1 Further advice and assistance is available from the London Borough of Hackneys Education health and Safety Team on 020 8356 2278.

6. New or expectant mothers - risks and control measures

6.1 Movements and postures

What is the risk?	How to avoid the risk
<p>Standing Continuous standing during the working day may lead to dizziness, faintness and fatigue. It can also contribute to an increased risk of premature childbirth and miscarriage.</p>	<p>Where appropriate, introduce or adapt work equipment, alter storage arrangements or redesign workstations or job content.</p>
<p>Sitting Pregnancy-specific changes pose a relatively high risk of thrombosis or embolism, particularly with constant sitting. In the later stages of pregnancy women are more likely to experience backache which can be intensified by remaining in a specific position for a long period of time.</p>	<p>Pregnant women should avoid long periods spent standing or sitting without regular exercise or movement to maintain healthy circulation.</p>
<p>Prolonged work, poor working posture and excessive movement may also cause backache.</p>	<p>The opportunity to alternate between standing and sitting should be provided. If this is not possible additional breaks should be provided.</p>
<p>Confined space It is hazardous working in confined workspaces, or with workstations which do not adjust sufficiently to take account of increased abdominal size, particularly during the later stages of pregnancy. This may lead to strain or sprain injuries. Dexterity, agility, co-ordination, speed of movement, reach and balance may also be impaired.</p>	

6.2 Manual handling

What is the risk?	How to avoid the risk
<p>Pregnant workers are especially at risk from manual handling injury. For example, hormonal changes can affect the ligaments, increasing susceptibility to injury; and postural problems may increase as the pregnancy progresses.</p> <p>There can also be risks for those who have recently given birth, for example after a Caesarean section there is likely to be temporary limitation on lifting and handling capability.</p> <p>Breastfeeding mothers may experience discomfort due to increased breast size and sensitivity.</p>	<p>Manual handling risk assessment is covered in Chapter 11. A revised risk assessment may show that manual handling tasks can be reduced for everyone by an adjustment to the nature of the task.</p> <p>If not, the specific needs of the new or expectant mother need to be addressed by, for example, reducing the amount of physical work she does or by providing aids for her.</p>

6.3 Shocks and vibration

What is the risk?	How to avoid the risk
<p>Regular exposure to shocks and low frequency vibration, for example driving or riding in off-road vehicles, or excessive movement may increase the risk of a miscarriage.</p> <p>Long-term exposure to whole body vibration does not cause abnormalities to the unborn child but there may be an increased risk of prematurity or low birth rate.</p>	<p>New or expectant mothers should avoid exposure to uncomfortable whole body vibration, especially at low frequency or where the abdomen is exposed to shocks or jolts.</p>

6.4 Noise

What is the risk?	How to avoid the risk
<p>There appears to be no specific risk to new or expectant mothers though prolonged exposure to loud noise may lead to increased blood pressure and tiredness.</p>	<p>Risk assessment under the requirements of the Noise at Work Regulations 1989 should be carried out.</p>

6.5 Ionising radiation

What is the risk?	How to avoid the risk
<p>Cosmic radiation (for example, from the sun) may affect frequent flyers.</p> <p>Use of radioactive substances may pose a risk to the unborn child if significant amounts are ingested or inhaled.</p>	<p>Work with radioactive substances should be discontinued.</p>

6.6 Biological agents

What is the risk?	How to avoid the risk
<p>Examples include hepatitis B, HIV, herpes, TB, chickenpox, and typhoid.</p> <p>In school settings there is an increased risk of childhood diseases.</p>	<p>For most workers, the risk of infection is not higher at work than from elsewhere. Where, however, exposure to the risk of being bitten by, for example, an infected pupil is present work should be discontinued.</p>

6.7 Carbon monoxide

What is the risk?	How to avoid the risk
<p>Carbon monoxide is produced when petrol, diesel and liquefied petroleum gas are used as a source of power in engines and in domestic appliances. Pregnant women may have a heightened sensitivity to the effects of exposure.</p>	<p>Vehicles must not be used in enclosed areas unless absolutely essential, in which case pregnant workers should not be allowed access.</p>

6.8 Working hours

What is the risk?	How to avoid the risk
<p>Long working hours, shift work and night work can have a significant effect on the health of new and expectant mothers, and on breastfeeding.</p> <p>Because they suffer from increasing tiredness, some pregnant and breastfeeding women may not be able to work irregular or late shifts, night work or overtime.</p>	<p>Working hours may need to be adjusted temporarily, as well as other working conditions, including the timing and frequency of rest breaks.</p> <p>Alternative work may need to be provided.</p>

6.9 Facilities

What is the risk?	How to avoid the risk
<p>Resting facilities Tiredness increases during and after pregnancy and may be exacerbated by work-related factors. The need for rest is both physical and mental.</p>	<p>Access to somewhere where she can sit or lie down comfortably in privacy, and without disturbance, at appropriate intervals should be provided. Access to clean drinking water should also be available.</p>
<p>Hygiene facilities Increased risks to health and safety, including significant risks of infection and kidney disease. Because of pressure on the bladder and other changes associated with pregnancy, pregnant women often have to go to the toilet more frequently and more urgently than others.</p> <p>Breastfeeding women may also need to do so because of increased fluid intake to promote milk production.</p>	<p>Rules may need to be relaxed to allow expectant and nursing mothers to leave their workstation/activity at short notice.</p>
<p>Storage facilities Obstacles to breastfeeding in the workplace may significantly affect the health of both mother and child.</p>	<p>Protective measures include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to a private room where women can breastfeed or express breast milk; • Use of secure, clean refrigerators for storing expressed breast milk while at work, and facilities for washing, sterilising and storing receptacles; • Time off to express milk or breastfeed.

6.10 Occupational stress

What is the risk?	How to avoid the risk
<p>New and expectant mothers can be particularly vulnerable to occupational stressors, for various reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hormonal, physiological and psychological changes occur; • Financial, emotional and job insecurity may be issues; • It may be difficult to organise work and private life. <p>Additional stressors may occur due to a woman's anxiety about the pregnancy, or about its outcome.</p> <p>Stress has been associated in some studies with increased incidence of miscarriage and pregnancy loss, and also with impaired breastfeeding.</p> <p>Women who have recently suffered loss, for example through stillbirth or miscarriage, or trauma associated with pregnancy or childbirth will be especially vulnerable to stress.</p>	<p>Known organisational stressors need to be taken account of together with the particular psychosocial factors affecting the individual woman.</p> <p>Protective measures may include adjustments to working conditions or working hours, and ensuring that the necessary understanding, support and recognition is available when the woman returns to work, while her privacy is also respected.</p>

6.11 Extremes of heat and cold

What is the risk?	How to avoid the risk
<p>There is a greater risk to pregnant workers of heat stress due to prolonged exposure to hot environments. Breastfeeding may be impaired by heat dehydration.</p> <p>Working in extreme cold may be a hazard for pregnant women and their unborn child.</p> <p>The risks are particularly increased if there are sudden changes in temperature.</p>	<p>Adequate rest and refreshment breaks should be provided alongside unrestricted access to drinking water.</p> <p>New and expectant mothers should note that thirst is not an early indicator of heat stress. They should drink water before they get thirsty, preferably in small and frequent amounts.</p>

6.12 Work with display screen equipment

What is the risk?	How to avoid the risk
<p>Anxiety existed about radiation from VDUs but HSE has consulted NRPB who have advised that levels of ionising and non-ionising radiation from VDUs is well below the recommendations for limiting risk to human health.</p>	<p>In the light of scientific evidence there is no need for pregnant women to stop using a VDU. However, where concern still exists the Health and Safety Department may be approached for an update on any new information.</p>

6.13 Working alone

What is the risk?	How to avoid the risk
<p>Pregnant women are more likely to require urgent medical attention.</p>	<p>Communication systems may need to be revised and the specific risk assessment (carried out under Chapter 14) should be revisited.</p>

6.14 Work at height

What is the risk?	How to avoid the risk
<p>Risk of falls</p>	<p>The specific risk assessment (carried out under Chapter 13) should be revisited and the increased risks evaluated and controlled. In general, pregnant workers should not work from ladders or access platforms.</p>

6.15 Travelling

What is the risk?	How to avoid the risk
<p>Travelling in the course of work or to and from work, can be problematic and involve risks including fatigue, vibrations, stress, static posture, discomfort and accidents.</p>	<p>Check under specific headings of this Appendix for measures to reduce these risks.</p>

6.16 Work related violence

What is the risk?	How to avoid the risk
<p>New and expectant, particularly where in contact with customers and clients, may be exposed to violence. In schools separating fighting children and running children add to the problems. This could lead to detachment of the placenta, miscarriage, premature delivery and underweight birth, and it may affect the ability to breastfeed.</p>	<p>Measure to reduce the risk include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing adequate training and advice to staff; • improving the design and layout of the workplace (e.g. security screens); • Changing the design of the job (e.g. does face to face contact have to take place? Use of telephone). • More support / staff <p>If the risk cannot be significantly reduced new and expectant women should be found suitable alternative work.</p>

6.17 Work equipment and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

What is the risk?	How to avoid the risk
<p>Work equipment and personal protective equipment is not generally designed for use by pregnant women. Physical movement may be impaired and PPE may not fit comfortably.</p>	<p>Suitable alternative equipment should be considered. If this is not possible than alternative work should be explored.</p>

6.18 Inappropriate nutrition

What is the risk?	How to avoid the risk
<p>Adequate and appropriate nutrition and liquid refreshment (especially clean drinking water) at regular intervals is essential to the health of the new or expectant mother and her child(ren).</p> <p>Appetite and digestion are affected by hormonal and physiological changes, including those resulting in or affecting “morning” sickness, the position of the unborn child in the womb, the nutritional needs of the individual mother and her unborn child and her unborn or breastfeeding child(ren).</p>	<p>Breaks must be suitably arranged at the request of the individual.</p> <p>Protective measures must be taken to deal with these constraints, particularly with regard to the need for rest, meal and refreshment breaks, and to maintain appropriate hygiene standards.</p>

6. Aspects of pregnancy that may affect work

Aspects of pregnancy	Factors in work
“Morning” sickness	Early shift work Exposure to nauseating smells
Backache	Standing/manual handling/posture
Varicose veins	Standing/Sitting
Haemorrhoids	Working in hot conditions
Frequent visits to the toilet	Difficulty in leaving job/workplace
Increasing size	Use of protective clothing Work in confined areas Manual handling
Tiredness	Overtime Evening work
Balance	Problems of working on slippery, wet surfaces
Comfort	Problems of working in tightly fitting work uniforms

Risk Assessment

Description of task	
Pregnant Worker (Name)	
Location	Assessment Details
School / Centre /Team	Risk Assessment No. _____
Name of Assessor _____	Date of Assessment _____
Position Held _____	Planned Review Date _____

Hazard	Risk	Individuals Affected
1) Effects of Pregnancy 2) Past Medical History 3) Client Group (Violence) 4) Employed Duties 5) Environment 6) Exposure to Communicable Diseases 7) Chemicals <i>Complete Check List</i>	Miscarriage Premature Delivery Infection Medical complications Harm to Unborn Child	Pregnant Person Unborn Child

Control Measures already in place	

Calculation of risk (use risk calculator overleaf)					
Seriousness (A)		Likelihood (B)		Risk =A x B	

Control Measures required to reduce risk (if other than minimal risk)

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Calculation of residual risk (use risk calculator overleaf)

Seriousness (A)		Likelihood (B)		Risk =A x B	
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Action Plan

Action	By whom	By when	Date completed/signature

Line Manager's remarks

I agree with the risk assessment recorded above.
 There are no outstanding Actions **OR** I have taken the following actions: (delete as necessary).

Signed

Position

Date:

Risk calculator			
Seriousness (A)	Rating	Likelihood (B)	Rating
Fatality	5	Very likely	5
Major injury to several people	4	Likely	4
Major injury	3	Possible	3
Minor injury	2	Unlikely	2
Trivial injury	1	Very unlikely	1
Risk = Seriousness (A) x Likelihood (B)			
Score	Risk	Action required	
1 to 3	Minimal	Control measures should be kept under review	
4 to 9	Low	Control measures should be fine tuned to reduce risk further if possible	
10 to 15	Medium	Control measures should be improved within 2 weeks, consider an alternative lower risk activity	
16 to 25	High	Activity NOT to proceed until risks addressed. Seek immediate advice from TLT Health and Safety Manager	

Pregnant Worker Risk Assessment Checklist

Describe Work Activities
Describe Tasks undertaken by employee. Include her everyday duties which may include DSE and office work, external meetings with clients, transport between establishments and any other activities she thinks are relevant to her pregnancy

Effects of Pregnancy		
Examples	Present	Comments
Morning Sickness/Nausea		
Backache		
Tiredness /Discomfort		

Other		
Past Medical History		
Examples	Present	Comments
History of miscarriage		
Other Relevant Medical Conditions		
• High Blood Pressure		
• Stress		
• Previous Difficult Pregnancies		
Client Group		
Examples	Present	Comments
Unpredictable		
Challenging Behaviour		
Level of Care Needs		
Violence		
Employed Duties		
Examples of significant activities	Present	Comments
Manual Handling		
Driving		
Lone Working		
Administration of Medicines		
DSE work		
Physical Education		
Work at Height		

Environment		
Examples	Present	Comments
Workspace Issues		
Rest Facilities		
Ionising Radiation		
Postural Issues		
Exposure To Communicable Diseases		
Examples	Present	Comments
Hepatitis		
TB		
HIV		
Rubella / Measles		
Chickenpox		
Chemicals & Biohazard		
Examples	Present	Comments
Use of Mutagens, Carcinogens or asthmagens		
Environment		
Chemicals		
Body Fluid Spillage		
Other		

	Name	Signature
Member of Staff		
Assessor		