

# **New and Expectant Mothers**

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Employers must ensure that they protect new and expectant mothers from potential hazards in the workplace.

The law requires employers to assess the risks to their employees, including new and expectant mothers, and do as much as possible to control those risks.

This risk assessment must take account of work, which is of a kind, which could involve risks to the health and safety of a new or expectant mother because of her condition, or to that of her baby, from any processes, working conditions and physical, biological or chemical agents.

A new or expectant mother is defined as an employee who is pregnant, or has given birth within the previous 6 months, or who is breast-feeding.

## **The Assessment**

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The risk assessment must consider the following:

**Manual handling** - all expectant and new mothers must avoid significant manual handling operations.

**The use of chemicals and substances** – where identified as being hazardous, the use of chemicals must be eliminated or substituted from the work program of the employee.

**Working whilst standing** – where the employee's role involves considerable standing, there should be regular short rest breaks.

**Operating hazardous machinery** – operating certain types of machinery (i.e. noisy, vibrating, etc.) can promote fatigue, discomfort and put the employees safety at risk. The use of this type of equipment should be avoided.

**Night work** – this type of work can cause concern or stress to certain individuals. Where this is identified, the person should be offered the option of transferring to daytime work.

The findings from assessments must be explained to, and given to, the pregnant worker. An example form can be found in Guidance Note – New and Expectant Mothers, subtopic New and Expectant Mothers Assessment form in the document library.

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When you are notified in writing by an employee that she:

- Is pregnant
- Has given birth within the previous 6 months; or

- Is breast-feeding

You must:

**Identify any risks to the new or expectant mother.** Where there are risks to the health and safety of a new or expectant mother, which cannot be avoided by the preventative measures taken, you will need to:

- Alter her working conditions and / or hours if possible and would avoid the risk. If this is not possible you must:
- Offer alternative work. If this is not possible:
- Suspend her from work. The Employment Rights Act 1996 requires that this be on full pay.

### **Information**

You should ensure that all new and expectant mothers are provided with comprehensive and relevant information on:

- The risks to their health and safety as identified by the risk assessments; and
- The measures adopted by the employer to control these risks.

### **Review of Assessments**

The risk assessment for the pregnant worker must be kept under review. Although the hazards are likely to remain the same throughout the pregnancy the risk may vary through the different stages of pregnancy.

Co-ordination, speed of movement and reach are all likely to be impaired because of the pregnant workers' increase in size.

### **Rest Facilities**

Facilities should be provided for expectant and nursing mothers to rest, which are:

- Conveniently situated in relation to sanitary facilities; and
- Include the facility to lie down.