



New and Expectant Mothers Risk Assessment Form Guidance Notes for Managers and Staff

Definition

The Health and Safety Executive define "new or expectant mother" as an employee who is pregnant, who has given birth within the previous six months, or who is breastfeeding.

A new and expectant mother's risk assessment must be carried out by the School/Service on notification that the member of staff is pregnant.

Introduction

- This guidance provides information for both individuals and managers to assist in ensuring the health and safety of new and expectant mothers.
- It is important to remember that pregnancy is a part of everyday life and should not be regarded as ill health. The majority of health and safety issues relating to new and expectant mothers can be addressed by good health and safety management procedures.
- The University has an obligation to assess any risks to health and safety in the workplace and possible adverse effects on pregnant or breastfeeding staff and their children, including the unborn, and to take appropriate action. This may include offering a temporary variation in duties, working hours or working conditions.
- Some hazards have the potential to increase the risk to new and expectant mothers and therefore once a woman informs her line-manager that she is pregnant, the relevant work activities must be re-assessed and modification or alterations made when and where appropriate.

Manual Handling

Pregnant and postnatal mothers are at much greater risk than usual from manual handling risks. They should not lift any heavy loads, such as single packs of paper or parcels. If heavy items need to be moved a manual handling risk assessment will be needed. Expectant and new mothers should not normally be involved in such tasks.

Tasks that could normally be done safely, without difficulty, may become inadvisable for expectant and new mothers. It is recommended that pregnant women should avoid tasks which also involve stretching up, down or out, for example retrieving items from under desks or from between cabinets, particularly when it is uncomfortable to do so.

- Hormonal changes may affect ligaments making them more susceptible to injury.
- Postural and dexterity problems increase as the pregnancy develops due to increased size.
- Re-assess the risks with regard to manual handling.
- Look to avoid or reduce manual handling tasks undertaken by new and expectant mothers.

Work with Display Screen Equipment

Work with display screen equipment does not cause any particular risks to new or expectant mothers, although there are a number of factors which need to be considered:

- Sitting for long periods of time should be avoided, break up work to get up and move about regularly.
- As the pregnancy develops and the expectant mother increases in size, posture and mobility issues may cause discomfort.
- Make sure there is sufficient space to move at the workstation.
- Back pain is common in pregnancy, so ensure good posture.

Continuous Standing / Sitting

- Standing for long periods may lead to dizziness, faintness and fatigue.
- Standing or sitting for long periods should be avoided.
- Consider a change in the work pattern and/or introduce more frequent breaks to enable new and expectant mothers to move about.

Chemicals

- Re-assess relevant COSHH assessments taking into account the specific risk phrases.
- Work with substances which may present a risk to the mother and/or child must be avoided – remove the mother from specific high risk activities as appropriate.
- Discuss general health concerns with the Occupational Health Service.

Travel

- Travel may require to be minimised.
- Foreign travel may require a medical certificate from a G.P.
- Foreign travel after 36 weeks is generally restricted and you may need to seek further advice from the travel company, and / or travel insurers.
- Discuss vaccination issues with the Occupational Health Service or G.P.
- Where travel to / from work can be flexible pregnant mothers may prefer to avoid rush hour traffic in order to reduce travelling time, obtain seats on public transport, etc.

Fatigue / Discomfort / Stress

- Exposure to nauseating smells such as cooking or chemical odours may increase "morning sickness", therefore you may need to consider avoiding or restricting exposure to certain areas / activities, for a limited time period where feasible.
- Expectant mothers are likely to require more frequent visits to the toilet and this must be taken into consideration with respect to the work pattern, access to toilets, etc.
- Exposure to very high / low temperatures may cause additional discomfort and consideration may require to be given to avoiding or minimising exposure to certain areas / activities.
- As the expectant mother increases in size consideration will require to be given to a number of issues relating to comfort, dexterity, etc. such as work in awkward, restricted or confined areas.
- As the expectant mother increases in size consideration may also require to be given to the suitability of clothing - uniforms, personal protective equipment (PPE), etc.

Facilities

- New and expectant mothers must be provided with access to somewhere to rest, breastfeed or express milk. This room should be private such as a first aid room, where available, or a private office or room.
- New and expectant mothers must be provided with access to toilets and hand-basins. Restricted access to toilet facilities can increase the risk of infection and kidney disease.

Confidentiality

- The confidentiality concerning a women's pregnancy means an employer should not make it known to others that she is pregnant if she does not wish it to be known, or if she does not consent to it.
- There may be exceptional circumstances where there is significant risk to the health and safety of the new or expectant mother or her child where limited disclosure may be necessary although this will be done with full consultation with the new or expectant mother.
- If new or expectant mothers are concerned about confidentiality they should raise this with their line manager or Human Resources.

Occupational Health

- Where a specific issue of concern remains, which cannot be addressed by the School/Service, Occupational Health can be contacted for further guidance and advice on occupational health related matters.
- Human Resources should be contacted for advice on any HR issues. If any medical issues are discussed as part of the New and Expectant Mothers risk assessment a referral should be made to occupational health.

Some useful resources

HSE – Expectant Mothers

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/mothers/>

Pregnancy Risk Assessment Form

<https://staff.napier.ac.uk/services/hr/HRDocuments/Pages/Forms.aspx>

Maternity Leave Policy

<https://staff.napier.ac.uk/services/hr/HRDocuments/Pages/Policy%20A-Z.aspx>

Health and Safety

<https://staff.napier.ac.uk/services/governance-compliance/healthandsafety/Pages/HealthSafety.aspx>

Occupational Health

<https://staff.napier.ac.uk/services/hr/workingattheUniversity/healthandwellbeing/Pages/OccupationalHealth.aspx>

Employee Assistance Programme

Workplace Options has some valuable information and resources on pregnancy and pregnancy related subjects

<https://staff.napier.ac.uk/services/hr/workingattheUniversity/healthandwellbeing/Pages/Employee%20Assistance%20Programme.aspx>

Health & Safety Team, Governance & Compliance

Health&safetyoffice@napier.ac.uk