

Risk Assessment - New & Expectant Mothers

Relevant Legislation:

The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

Why is there a specific need to conduct a new & expectant mother's risk assessment?

Pregnancy should not be equated with ill health, however some hazards in the workplace may however affect the health and safety of new & expectant mothers and of their unborn children, and these should be assessed in your risk assessment.

So as an employer, what do I have do?

- your risk assessment should consider certain physical, biological and chemical agents these are listed in the relevant HSE guidance, including manual handling, exposure to ionising radiation, extremes of cold and heat, biological agents known to cause abortion, exposure to certain chemical agents e.g. mercury;
- if your assessment reveals a risk to new or expectant mothers then you should tell female employees of childbearing age about the potential risks if they are, or could be pregnant or breast feeding. You should also explain what you will do to make sure that they are not exposed to the risks that cause them harm;
- where significant risks have been identified decisions should be made about what action to take. As a general rule you should consider removing the hazard or seek to prevent exposure to the risk. Where this is not feasible, then the risk should be controlled;
- you will need to keep the assessments under review. Although the hazards are likely to remain constant, the possibility of damage to the foetus will vary at different stages of pregnancy.

What should I do if I have taken all control measures that are reasonably practicable and a risk still exists to a expectant or new mother?

There is a hierarchy of steps you should follow:

Step 1. temporarily adjust her working conditions and/or hours of work or if it is not reasonable to do so or would not avoid the risk:

Step 2. offer her suitable alternative work if any is available, or if this is not feasible you must:

Step 3. suspend her from work (give paid leave) for as long as necessary to protect her safety or health or that of her child.

Do I need to do a new assessment for every new or expectant mother?

No you don't need to repeat the risk assessment every time, but you should always review the risk assessment if there are any changes to the work or personal factors unique to the individual e.g. medical conditions

Helpful Information

- Risk Assessment - General Information Sheet
- New and expectant mothers at work. ISBN 0 7176 0826 3.

Contact

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