



New and expectant mothers – guidance to accompany NEM1 risk assessment form

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.

Risk assessment

There is a legal requirement to assess the risks specific to new and expectant people. Further guidance and advice on this is available below.

The University has a robust system in place to ensure Schools carry out risk assessments and these assessments should already highlight any risks (biological, chemical or physical) specific to people of child bearing age and to pregnant people. The majority of health and safety issues relating to people of child bearing age and to pregnant people should therefore already be addressed by good health and safety management procedures.

When a person notifies their School that they are pregnant, or has given birth in the previous six months, the School must review all the applicable risk assessments to ensure that they are not at any additional risk, taking into account factors specific to the individual.

The responsibility to ensure this is carried out is noted within the [University's Maternity Policy](#) (last revised April 2022), available from Human Resources.

This Policy states:

Maternity Procedure

1. Before Commencing Maternity Leave

1.1 Early Notification of Pregnancy and Risk Assessments

You are encouraged to share your news with your manager as early as possible - this will be treated confidentially. Once your manager knows you are pregnant they should arrange for a 'New & Expectant Mothers Risk Assessment' to be carried out, and for any reasonable adjustments to be made.

Please note, if you are employed by the University in more than one post you must notify all your managers of your pregnancy and subsequent intention to take maternity leave.

Heads of School or Professional Services have responsibilities for protecting the health and safety of their employees, including those who are pregnant, those who have given birth within the previous six months and those who are breastfeeding.

Once a line manager has been informed that one of their employees is pregnant, they should arrange for a NEM1 risk assessment to be undertaken, and also for any reasonable adjustments to be made as appropriate. This is particularly important where there are known personal or work area risks.

When a person finds out, or suspects, that they may be pregnant they should speak to their line manager and/or School/Area Safety Adviser in order to ensure that a review of risk assessments is carried out, as early as possible in the pregnancy. This will enable the person to discuss and review the activities they are involved in and raise any concerns they may have regarding their work during their pregnancy. The person and their manager should review the work activities as the pregnancy progresses in order to take into account any risks which may arise at different stages. It is a good idea to schedule these reviews in for every few months, and more often towards the end of the pregnancy.

Following these reviews, the person and the School, etc. may decide upon temporary changes to the activities, and/or additional control measures if appropriate and these should be implemented as necessary.

Where a specific issue of concern remains, which can't be addressed by the School, etc. the Occupational Health Service can be contacted for further guidance and advice on occupational health related matters. Human Resources should be contacted for advice on any HR issues.

Risk Assessment

The University has put together a model risk assessment form for 'new and expectant mothers' which can be modified by Schools and individuals as appropriate.

[New and Expectant Mothers - Model Risk Assessment](#)

Hazards

The following provides information on some common hazards within a University environment and how new and expectant people can avoid or minimise the risks. This list is not exhaustive and it is therefore important that individuals and Schools consider the risks specific to the work activities and environment which may be relevant.

Manual Handling

- 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 people

Work with display screen equipment (DSE)

- Work with display screen equipment does not cause any particular risks to new or expectant people, although there are a number of factors which need to be considered:
- Sitting for long periods of time should be avoided, break up your 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. The University's Furniture Office can advise on lumbar support if necessary.

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 people to move about.

Chemicals

- Re-assess relevant COSHH assessments taking into account the specific
- risk phrases noted below.
- 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.
- Refer to relevant Hazard statements for guidance (see below)
- Discuss general health concerns with the Occupational Health Service.

Hazard Statements

Hazard Statements are provided on the Safety Data Sheet (SDS) of hazardous substances to give an indication of any particular concerns of using that substance (see [Hazardous Substances | Health & Safety | Health and Safety Department](#) for more information).

If you use or may be exposed to chemicals, the most relevant hazard statements to look out for are noted below:

- **H370** Causes damage to organs
- **H351** Suspected of causing cancer
- **H350** May cause cancer
- **H340** May cause genetic defects
- **H350i** May cause cancer (inhalation)
- **H360** May damage fertility or the unborn child
- **H361** Suspected of damaging fertility or the unborn child
- **H362** May cause harm to breast-fed children
- **H371** May cause damage to organs and **H341** Suspected of causing genetic defects

Biological materials including micro-organisms / GM work

- Re-assess relevant risk assessments.
- Consider risks associated with chemo-therapeutic agents used to treat any laboratory acquired infection which may occur.
- Work with biological materials which may present a significant risk to the mother and/or child must be avoided – remove the mother from specific high-risk activities as appropriate.
- Discuss specific issues with the local Biological Safety Adviser and/or University Biological Safety Adviser.
- Discuss general health concerns with the Occupational Health Service.

- Discuss vaccination issues with the Occupational Health Service or G.P.
- Refer to the ACDP Guidance [Infection Risks to New and Expectant Women in the Workplace - A Guide for Employers, 1997](#)

Radiation

- Refer to [Radiation Protection Code of Practice 013: Working with Radiation When Pregnant or Breastfeeding](#) - before re-assessing relevant risk assessments for work with radiation.
- Work with radiation which may present a significant risk to the person and/or child must be avoided – remove the person from specific high-risk activities for the duration of the pregnancy if appropriate.
- Discuss specific issues with the local Radiation Protection Supervisor and/or University Radiation Protection Adviser.
- Discuss general health concerns with the Occupational Health Service.

Work with animals

This section is mainly of relevance to those working in the small and large animal hospitals and those working outdoors.

- Re-assess relevant risk assessments for work with animals.
- Cats
 - Pregnant people should avoid coming into contact with cat faeces due to the risk of toxoplasmosis.
 - The emptying of cat litter trays should be avoided if possible. If this cannot be avoided then disposable rubber gloves should be worn and hands washed thoroughly afterwards.
 - Wash hands thoroughly after handling cats
- Sheep
 - Pregnant people should avoid coming into contact with pregnant or milking ewes and any newborn lambs as sheep may carry toxoplasmosis, listeriosis or chlamydiosis organisms.

Lone / out-of-hours work

- Re-assess relevant risk assessments for lone and / or out of hours work
- Special consideration may require to be given to employees who work at night. Where an employee works night and produces a medical certificate indicating that it is necessary for the individual not to work nights, then night work must be suspended for the period of time identified in the medical certificate and alternative daytime work should be offered. For further guidance on this issue refer to Human Resources.

Travel

- Travel may require to be minimised, consider the [Sustainable Travel Policy - version 2.3 \(August 2024\).pdf](#)
- Where travel to / from work can be flexible pregnant people may prefer to avoid rush hour traffic in order to reduce travelling time, obtain seats on public transport, etc. International travel may require a medical certificate from a G.P.

- International travel, in particular if flying, 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.

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 people 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. They should also be provided with a place to rest both during pregnancy and after if breastfeeding.
- 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 person 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.

There may be some potential problems with regard to the expectant person getting to their place of work, especially in the later stages of the pregnancy. They may have difficulty climbing stairs as the pregnancy develops, and in buildings where there is no working lift consideration may require to be given to relocating the worker to a lower floor, or allowing them to work from home if appropriate, for a limited period of time.

General health concerns including community infections

There may be a requirement to take the person's own health into account in the risk assessment process, in particular if they have been provided with any specific guidance by their healthcare provider such as their midwife or GP. This should be discussed and recorded in the risk assessment.

Recent experience has shown that community infections could be of particular risk to those in the later stages of pregnancy in general, or at any stage depending upon their own health. Any such risks must also be taken into account and controls put into place to mitigate/reduce that risk. [NHS Inform has valuable information on ill health in pregnancy](#) that should be taken into account.

Facilities

New and expectant people 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 people must be provided with access to toilets and hand- basins. Restricted access to toilet facilities can increase the risk of infection and kidney disease.

University Policies

Relevant University policies may be accessed via the links below. For advice on the issues raised in these policies please contact Human Resources.

- [University's Maternity Policy](#)
- [Family Leave related policies](#)

Notifying the Employer

It is recommended that expectant people inform their line manager and/or School/Area Safety Adviser as early as possible in the pregnancy in order to ensure that a review of relevant risk assessments is carried out. It should be remembered that the first 12 weeks of the pregnancy are an important time.

The University is legally required to assess risks to all staff including people of child bearing age and therefore most of the risks should already be adequately controlled. Expectant people should be aware that the University is not legally obliged to implement all legislative issues that relate to the pregnancy until they have been informed in writing that an individual is pregnant. In order to assist in the discharge of responsibilities towards the health and safety of the member of staff and unborn child, it is therefore advisable that written notification should be made at an early stage in the pregnancy.

We would advise that the new or expectant mother speaks in confidence to their line manager at an early stage in order that they can discuss and review the activities in which they are involved and raise any concerns that may pertain to the work activities during the pregnancy and after the birth. This would enable the person and manager to review the work activities as the pregnancy progresses in order to take into account any risks which may arise at different stages.

Occupational Health Service (OHS)

New or expectant people and / or managers can discuss any general concerns they may have in confidence with the Occupational Health Service. The Occupational Health Service is staffed by registered health practitioners and provides a confidential service, which means that personal information is treated in medical confidence. The exception to this is if the Occupational Health Practitioners are made aware of any situation which is considered to pose a significant risk to the health and safety of the person or their child. In these exceptional circumstances the person would be made aware of the risk and the requirement to notify their employer.

Contact details for the Occupational Health Service are:

0131 650 8190

Occupational.Health@ed.ac.uk

Confidentiality

The confidentiality concerning a person's pregnancy means an employer should not make it known to others that they are pregnant if they do not wish it to be known, or if they do not consent to it.

There may be exceptional circumstances where there is a significant risk to the health and safety of the new or expectant person or their child where limited disclosure may be necessary although this will be done with full consultation with the new or expectant person.

If new or expectant people are concerned about confidentiality, they should raise this with their line manager / HR / OHS as appropriate.

Sources of external guidance and advice

- [NHS Inform Active Living: Keep active during pregnancy](#)
- [NHS Inform Feeding your baby](#)
- [Vaccines in pregnancy](#)
- [Health and Safety for New and Expectant Mothers - Health and Safety Executive \(HSE\)](#)
- [National Childbirth Trust](#)
- [Working Families](#)

Document version

Version number	Summary of change	Date and by whom
V1.1	Updated template and links	04/11/2025 JR