

New and expectant mothers.

Schools Safety Guide

Document information

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Introduction

The Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations require employers to assess risks in the workplace. In addition, there is a specific duty to assess the risk to new and expectant mothers and put suitable controls in place to control those risks.

Definitions

- **A new or expectant mother** is someone who is pregnant or given birth within the last six months or who is breastfeeding.
- **Given birth** is defined as having delivered a living child or after 24 weeks of pregnancy a still born child.

Generic risk assessment

Hazards in the workplace that pose a health & safety risk to new and expectant mothers must be identified by employers, who must take action to remove or reduce the risk. If a risk is identified, all female employees of child bearing age should be informed of the potential risk even if they are not pregnant, as it is possible that they could be in the early stages of pregnancy - during the first 4-6 weeks, pregnancy can go undetected.

Specific risk assessment

After the employee has given notification of pregnancy or has given birth in the last six months or if she is breastfeeding a specific risk assessment must be carried out for the employee based on your general assessment and any medical advice that has been provided by a doctor. This assessment must be recorded and then regularly monitored and reviewed.

Note: the pregnant or nursing mother should be involved in producing and reviewing her specific risk assessment.

Where significant risk is found, you must take all reasonably practicable measures to remove the risk or prevent exposure to it; for example, by altering the working conditions or hours of work.

If the risk cannot be avoided, then you should consider offering suitable alternative work. If alternative work is not an option, then you may need to consider **suspension on maternity grounds** - contact HR for further advice before making this decision.

Factors to consider when carrying out a risk assessment

The risk assessment should not only identify hazards but how serious the hazard is likely to be and how it will affect the individual.

Factors that may be an issue in schools include:

Physical hazards

- Manual handling/manual handling of pupils, tight awkward spaces and work stations
- Excessive noise
- Radiation (covered by specific legislation)
- Physical intervention/violence & aggression

Biological agents

- Infections (e.g. from animals [zoonoses] and pathogens [chicken pox, rubella, fifth disease etc])

Chemical hazards

- For example; chemical handling in laboratory or by cleaners

Working conditions

- Inadequate facilities
- Excessive working hours
- Unusually stressful work
- Temperature (high/low)
- Cigarette smoke
- Lone working
- Work at heights
- Travelling
- Exposure to violence

Rest facilities

You should provide suitable rest facilities for any worker who is pregnant or breastfeeding; this is not a legal requirement but encouraged as good practice to provide a healthy and safe environment for nursing mothers when expressing and storing their milk.

Note: toilets are not suitable for this purpose so should not be used.

What does the new or expectant mother need to do?

To allow her employer to fulfil their duties, a new or expectant mother must inform her employer in writing of her pregnancy; the employer can ask for written medical evidence.

Where the doctor considers work adjustments are required during pregnancy and breast feeding, a medical statement (Med 3 form) should be provided.

Further information

Please contact the health & safety team if you require further information on new and expectant mothers. For advice on maternity leave, please contact your human resources (HR) provider.

Sandwell Council has a Safety Management Procedure (SMP) on new and expectant mothers that Voluntary Controlled and Community Schools must adhere to.