



EXPECTANT AND NEW MOTHERS HANDBOOK

Questions and Answers for Staff



Produced by Health and Safety Services and Human Resources

INTRODUCTION

This Booklet aims to answer your questions if you are an expectant or new mother working at the University. It will provide you with guidance on what you should do and what safeguards are available to you to make sure both you and your unborn child, or baby are safe from harm whilst at the University.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

The following section provides answers to questions which are often asked by expectant and new mothers.

Do I have to tell the University?

There is no legal obligation for members of staff to inform the University they are expecting or are a new mother.



However, it is advisable that you do inform the University as soon as possible so a risk assessment can be carried out to ensure your job is not putting you and your unborn child or baby at risk.

This can be especially important for those who work in laboratories with chemicals and processes that could affect an unborn or newborn child. The sooner we know; the sooner steps can be taken to protect you and your child.

Note: All University employees must notify Human Resources of the date they expect to start their maternity leave by the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth.

How do I inform my College / Department?

Firstly talk to your College Manager, Line Manager or Senior Colleague. You should also complete and return a *Maternity Leave Application Form* to Human Resources.

This Form will ask you to state:

- You are pregnant.
- The week in which your baby is expected to be born.
- When you want maternity leave to start.

A MATB1 certificate which is available from your midwife, doctor or consultant should also be supplied to support your application.

What action will my College / Department take?

Once your College / Department has been notified by yourself, they must follow the University's New and Expectant Mothers Policy Standard to ensure you are not exposed to any significant risk during the course of your work.

Your College / Department will:

- In consultation with you and taking into account any medical advice from your GP or midwife, conduct a risk assessment to identify the hazards you are exposed to in the workplace (see *Things to consider during a Risk Assessment*).
- Share the findings of the risk assessment with you.
- Work with the Occupational Health Practitioner in carrying out health assessments if required.
- Take the necessary action to adjust your working conditions to eliminate or control any risks.
- Provide you with training and instruction on the controls needed to eliminate or control the risks.
- Monitor and review the risk assessment as the risks may vary dependent upon your health and the stage of your pregnancy or

as a result of a change in your work activity / environment.

- On request, try and provide suitable facilities for pregnant or nursing mothers if none are already available.

The above are the initial steps the College / Department must take. However, as a University employee and as a last resort, adjustments may have to be made to your job to protect your health and safety, and / or that of your child. Adjustments could include:

- A temporary change to your working conditions and / or hours of work.
- Suitable alternative work on the same terms and conditions as your existing post.
- If suitable alternative work cannot be provided, suspension from work on paid leave for as long as is necessary to protect you and your child.

Things to consider during a Risk Assessment:

The risk assessment will assess the significant risks you will encounter through the course of your work and how they vary dependent on your health and the stage of your pregnancy. A risk assessment should also be carried out when you return to work and if you wish to express milk at work if you are breastfeeding.

The following are examples of some of the things that might need to be considered:

- Lifting or carrying heavy loads.
- Standing or sitting for long lengths of time.
- Exposure to infectious diseases or hazardous substances e.g. lead, chemicals, biological agents.
- Stress arising from your work environment or your job.
- Computer work e.g. posture, adjustable chair, screen and monitor.
- Exposure to ionising radiation.
- Lone working or working long hours, shifts or unsociable hours.

- The working environment e.g. is it too hot / cold, ventilation, noise, accessibility.
- Exposure to physical / violent behaviour.
- Where you will be able to express and store breast milk.

Examples of what can be done to help you:

The following are examples of the actions that could be taken to protect you and your unborn child whilst at work:

Example 1: Colleagues load paper into the photocopier to remove the manual handling risk.

Example 2: Support provided to eliminate the need for contact with a hazardous chemical during the period of your pregnancy when the chemical would have been problematic.

Example 3: Working hours changed from 10.00 – 16.00 to avoid the rush hour to decrease stress caused by travelling to work.

Example 4: Temporary desk swap to another desk away from the radiators where it is too hot, causing discomfort.

Example 5: Review manual handling and display screen activities to ensure adjustments are identified and made as your pregnancy progresses and your physical state changes.

What action(s) will Human Resources take?

Once you have submitted your Maternity Leave Application and MATB1 certificate, Human Resources will:

- Confirm in writing the start date, payments due, the date pay will finish and the latest date of return to work unless a return to work date has been indicated. (**Note:** You can change the return to work date but you must give 2 months notice of the revised date).

- Send a copy of your confirmation letter to Head of College / Department and place a copy on your personal file.
- HR record the details on an Excel spreadsheet and complete a payroll sheet, filing it for the month the leave commences.
- HR informs Health & Safety Services of any pregnancies.
- In the month you leave, input the maternity leave details onto the Agresso system and send a Payroll Instruction Sheet to Payroll.
- HR assume you will take 12 months off (paid and unpaid) unless you inform them otherwise. If the date changes HR will inform Payroll.
- Payroll calculate all maternity payments.
- Provide information on the Childcare Voucher Scheme.
- Arrange Keeping in Touch Days.

What action will Health and Safety Services take?

Upon notification of a pregnancy:

- Remind you that your College / Department should complete [New and Expectant Mothers Risk Assessment](#) with you.
- Carry out health assessments if required.

How much time can I take for antenatal appointments?

There is no set limit to the amount of time you can take off. You are entitled to take time off with pay to keep antenatal appointments for care made on the advice of your GP, midwife or health visitor.



Please remember though to keep your College / Department informed of any appointments you have made, showing your appointment card if you have one available.

Can I change my hours to decrease stress?

If your specific risk assessment identifies stress as a risk you should discuss it with your College / Department, Health and Safety Services or Human Resources to see what reasonable adjustments can be made to help you. For example, adjusting your working hours so you don't have to travel in the rush hour.

Can I take more rest breaks?

Yes. But the times and frequency of these rest breaks must be agreed with your College / Department.

Can I work nights?

Yes, unless there is a specific work risk and your GP or midwife has provided a medical certificate stating you must not work nights. If the University cannot then offer suitable alternative day work on the same terms and conditions you can be suspended on paid leave for as long as is necessary to protect your health and safety and that of your child see *What action will my College / Department take?*

Can my GP sign me off sick if I think my health problems are as a result of work?

Being signed off sick may not get to the bottom of the cause of your ill health and it could affect your maternity benefits. Before asking to be signed off sick ensure your College / Department has carried out the actions outlined in *What action will my College / Department take?* If you feel this action plan is not being followed talk to your Head of College / Department or discuss your problems in confidence with your Safety Representative, Human Resources or Health and Safety Services to try and resolve the matter.

When can I start my Maternity Leave?

You may take maternity leave any time after the 11th week before the expected week of childbirth. However if your baby is born early, your maternity leave will automatically start the day after your baby is born. In addition, under the Maternity (Compulsory Leave) Regulations 1994, you must take 2 weeks maternity leave following the birth of your child. Further guidance can be found in *Human Resources - Family Support Framework*.

What are my Maternity rights?

You have the following rights:

- Time off work for antenatal care with pay.
- Maternity leave which is counted as continuous employment.
- Maternity pay.



- Protection against unfair treatment or dismissal.
- The right to return to your existing job or if that job is no longer available a job on no less favourable terms and conditions.
- Receive all normal pay awards and annual increments during the period of maternity leave. You will also continue to accrue pension benefits during your paid period of leave.

If you are not eligible to receive Statutory Maternity Pay, Human Resources will provide you with a SMP1 form that you must take to your local Department for Work and Pensions so you can claim Maternity Allowance.

Returning to Work:

If you plan to return to work before the end of the 52 week period you must give Human Resources 8 weeks notice by completing a *Notification of Early Return to Work Form*. A failure to do this gives the University the right to postpone your return until the 8 weeks have passed or the end of the 52 weeks, whichever arrives first.

You must also ensure your College / Department carries out another risk assessment upon your return to protect your health and safety, this is particularly important if you are breastfeeding.

Can I express and store breast milk when I return to Work?

Yes. But you must notify your College / Department (preferably before your return to work) to inform them you are breastfeeding and would like to be able to express and store milk.

Your College / Department must then carry out a specific risk assessment to ensure workplace hazards are identified to ensure the necessary actions are taken to eliminate or control any risks. See *Things to consider during a Risk Assessment* and *What action will my College / Department take?* Although it is not a legal requirement, the University will, on request try to provide suitable facilities for you to do this.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Diet and Health:



Boost your immune system with a healthy diet. A healthy immune system is the key to feeling

good and staying fit and well and if it is neglected we are more vulnerable to colds, flu, respiratory infections and general fatigue.

Healthy Eating: Eat a healthy well balanced diet rich in oily fish, chicken, fresh fruit, vegetables and healthy wholegrain. Natural immune boosting foods include kiwi fruit, cabbage, and avocado. Foods rich in vitamin B6 which helps to fight infection include banana, carrots, lentils, tuna, salmon, wholegrain flour and sunflower seeds.

A healthy diet contains:

- Plenty of starchy foods such as bread, rice, pasta, breakfast cereals, potatoes, yams and sweet potatoes - look for higher fibre versions where possible (e.g. wholemeal bread or pasta).
- At least five portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables daily.
- Moderate amounts of dairy products (or alternatives) - look for low fat versions where possible.



- Moderate amounts of meat, fish or alternatives such as eggs, beans, peas and lentils - look for lower fat versions where possible.
- The occasional treat (foods that are higher in fat, salt and/or added sugar should only be eaten in moderation).
- A little salt - always read the label.

Fluids: Avoid drinking any alcohol. Cut down on coffee and fizzy drinks.

You should drink between 2 to 3 litres of water per day.



Good health depends both on quantity and quality of fluid in our body. Herbal tea can also support health e.g.:

- Camomile (aids sleep).
- Both Echinacea and Green Tea (supports the immune system).

For further information about healthy eating, please visit the food standards agency website at: www.eatwell.gov.uk

For further information about the healthy benefits of tea, visit: www.tea.co.uk

Discuss any questions you have regarding your diet and how to eat healthily with your Midwife or GP.



Useful Websites / Interesting Reads:

- www.bangor.ac.uk/hss
- www.hse.gov.uk/mothers
- www.dwp.gov.uk/medical
- www.bangor.ac.uk/humanresources
- www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Workplace Health, Safety and Welfare Regulations 1992
- New and Expectant Mothers at Work: A guide for employers HSG122
- Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- Working Safely with Ionising Radiation: Guidance for expectant or breastfeeding mothers Leaflet INDG334
- Infection Risks to New and Expectant Mothers in the Workplace: A guide for Employers Guidance booklet ISBN 0 7176 1360 7
- Maternity (Compulsory Leave) Regulations 1994



PHYSICAL CHANGES

Change	Possible Effects	Risks / Impact at Work	Solutions
Hormonal Changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joints and ligaments loosen and become easy to strain and pull 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lifting and stretching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use suitable lifting aids • Switch to alternative duties temporarily
Circulation system has to work harder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Varicose veins • Cramp 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prolonged sitting or standing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take regular breaks • Access to a seat, and when sitting, try to put your feet up • Exercise legs and feet • Wear support tights
Increased blood flow and hormonal changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dizziness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prolonged standing • Working from heights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to a seat and fresh air • Drink plenty of water to prevent dehydration • Have regular snacks to maintain blood sugar levels • Avoid sudden change from sitting to standing
Low blood pressure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dizziness • Tiredness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prolonged standing • Working from heights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drink plenty of water to prevent dehydration • Have regular snacks to maintain blood sugar levels
Increase in body fluids	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swollen ankles and wrists • Carpal tunnel syndrome (tingling and pain in the hands and fingers) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prolonged standing or sitting • Repetitive movements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to a stool or chair • Drink plenty of water • Take regular breaks
Weight distribution changes and centre of gravity changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Danger of losing balance or falling • Difficulty moving around 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working from heights • Working in a confined space • Difficulty manoeuvring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check workspace for comfort
Expanding uterus puts pressure on bladder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discomfort • Bladder infections • Backache • Need to pee often 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discomfort • Need to leave site / workplace for access to the toilet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to the toilet • Comfortable seat and well designed workstation • Ability to plan work
Tiredness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you become exhausted, the baby does not receive enough oxygen and nutrients 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overworking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjust or cut back on hours • Take regular breaks • Access to fresh air
Hormonal, physical and emotional changes can lead to mood swings and anxiety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stress can increase the incident of miscarriage, premature birth, low birth weight, growth and development problems • High blood pressure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stressful situations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cut back hours • Take regular breaks • Change shift patterns • Switch duties to avoid stressful situations
Metabolic rate increases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overheating / heat stress • Fainting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discomfort 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to water • Avoid temperature extremes

Source: Tommy's

