



# **EXPECTANT AND NEW MOTHERS HANDBOOK**

## **Questions and Answers for Staff**



*Produced by Health and Safety*

## 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

### Do I have to tell the University?

It is advisable that you 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.

If you do not feel comfortable telling your Line Manager you may contact Health and Safety or Human Resources.

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 15<sup>th</sup> week before the expected week of childbirth.

### How do I inform my College / Service?

Firstly, talk to your Line Manager. You should also complete the Maternity Absence Leave Form in iTrent.

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 attached to support your application.

### What action will my College / Service take?

Once your Line Manager has been notified by yourself, they must follow ensure you are not

exposed to any significant risk during the course of your work.

Your Line Manager 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*).
- Make a referral to Occupational Health (OH) should further OH guidance be 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 Line Manager must take. However, 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 must also be carried out when you return to work within 6 months of giving birth or 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 may 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.

#### Can I change my hours to decrease stress?

If your specific risk assessment identifies stress as a risk you should undertake a [Stress Assessment and](#)

[Support Plan](#) with your Line Manager 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 Line Manager.

#### 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 / Service 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 Line Manager has carried out the actions outlined in *What action will my College / Service take?* If you feel this action plan is not being followed talk to your Head of College / Service or discuss your problems in confidence with your Safety Representative, Human Resources or Health and Safety to try and resolve the matter.

#### Returning to Work:

You must ensure your Line Manager 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 Line Manager (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 / Service 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 / Service take?* Although it is not a legal requirement, the University will, on request try to provide suitable facilities for you to do this.

### Useful Websites:

- [www.bangor.ac.uk/hss](http://www.bangor.ac.uk/hss)
- [www.hse.gov.uk/mothers](http://www.hse.gov.uk/mothers)
- [www.bangor.ac.uk/humanresources](http://www.bangor.ac.uk/humanresources)
- [www.nhs.uk/pregnancy/](http://www.nhs.uk/pregnancy/)
- [Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999](#)
- [Workplace Health, Safety and Welfare Regulations 1992](#)
- [Sex Discrimination Act 1975](#)
- [Working Safely with Ionising Radiation: Guidelines for expectant or breastfeeding mothers \(INDG334\)](#)
- [Infection Risks to New and Expectant Mothers in the Workplace: HSE Guidance](#)
- [Maternity \(Compulsory Leave\) Regulations 1994](#)



## PHYSICAL CHANGES

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

Source: Tommy's