

Guidelines for working conditions for pregnant employees



1. Background and purpose

Pregnant employees must have good safe working conditions at the University. The University emphasizes the importance of creating a working environment with flexible working conditions that meets the University's requirements whilst also taking account of the individual so that pregnant women can maintain a healthy, normal working day without risk to themselves or the unborn child. The University also wishes to prevent sick leave associated with pregnancy.

It is important to investigate the working conditions of pregnant women and how their work is organized because even relatively small changes can help prevent pregnant women reporting sick and thus help in keeping them at work.

2. Employees' responsibility

Employees are required to report their pregnancy to their line manager at least three months before the baby is due. It is recommended, however, that laboratory staff especially, and those doing a lot of heavy lifting, notify their manager as soon as pregnancy is confirmed. Working with certain chemicals and substances and work involving a lot of heavy lifting can damage the unborn child even at a very early stage in pregnancy. It can thus be important for special consideration to be given to women as soon as they know they are pregnant.

Pregnant women should also be aware that during the course of their pregnancy, issues might arise which make it necessary to draw up or revise a special work schedule.

3. Managers' responsibility

The line manager is to help make it a natural thing for pregnant women to report their pregnancy (possibly in confidence) at an early stage. As soon as a manager hears that an employee is pregnant, he/she should take the initiative to have a discussion with the pregnant woman (possibly with the participation of a representative of the local occupational health team). During this, there should be a specific assessment of the pregnant woman's working conditions and duties. These might for example involve:

- Working with chemical and biological substances and materials,
- Working with animals
- Heavy lifting
- Working positions, for example how much work is done sitting, walking or standing

- The scope and organisation of work, including the volume of work, working hours and general organization.

If necessary, an individual work schedule is to be drawn up for the pregnant woman and her work schedule should be routinely adjusted if required. If there are duties that she cannot undertake without risk, she should insofar as possible be reassigned to other duties.

In very special instances where it is not possible to organize work so that it entails no risk to the pregnant woman, she should be released from her current duties. If it is not possible to find other duties, the University should release her from all duties.

In order to provide protection against indirect chemical, radioactive and biological agents, it may be necessary to move a pregnant woman to another physical location if work is being done in the current environment with substances or materials that increase the risk to her or her unborn child.

If the line manager or the pregnant woman has any doubts about the risk assessment, the pregnant woman should contact their own physician or be referred to an occupational medicine clinic. The employee can be referred to an occupational medicine clinic by their own physician, their trade union or the health and safety committee at the employee's department.

4. Co-workers' responsibility

Co-workers are expected to show understanding for the need for pregnant staff to work less and that there may be certain types of work that they cannot do for a period of time.

5. Role of the Occupational Health Committee

The occupational health committees at the University of Copenhagen are responsible for assessing whether special issues such as organizing work or work processes in the area covered by the committee make it necessary to draw up supplementary, location-specific guidelines for the working conditions of pregnant women.

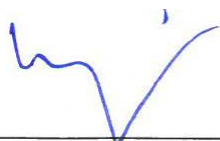
6. Validity and termination

The guidelines take effect on adoption by the Occupational Health Council and HSU (Head Coordination Committee).

Termination must comply with the rules in the coordination committee's circular according to which either of the parties can give three months notice of termination of the established guidelines. Before termination, the coordination committee is to endeavour to amend the present guidelines so as to make them satisfactory for the parties in the coordination committee.

Considered and adopted at the HSU meeting on 24 June 2009.

Considered and adopted at the Occupational Health Council meeting on 25 June 2009, and at the HSU meeting on 31 August 2011. A revision is considered and adopted at the Occupational Health Council meeting on 15 April 2015 and at the HSU meeting on 24 June 2015.



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Appendix to guidelines for pregnant employees' working conditions

This appendix includes a series of examples of issues that may be significant for the working environment of pregnant women. For more detailed information, please refer to Danish Working Environment Authority Guidance No. A.1.8. of January 2009 on working environments for pregnant and breast feeding mothers. The guidance is available at the Authority's website - www.at.dk

Physical impacts

Ionising radiation (e.g. alpha, beta and gamma radiation). Pregnant women must not be exposed to radiation exceeding 1 mSv p.a.

Extreme cold/heat, such as working in a greenhouse in summer can be very difficult for pregnant women and should be either limited or completely avoided.

Heavy lifting is best avoided throughout pregnancy. From the 13th week of pregnancy, pregnant women must not lift more than 10-12 kg under optimum lifting conditions (in front of the body, between mid-thigh and elbow height, easily manageable load with stable footing). The maximum lift falls from the 20-25th week of pregnancy to 5-6 kg due to the increased distance to the load.

Work involving lengthy standing and walking must be organized from the fourth month of pregnancy so that a pregnant woman can switch between sitting, standing or walking when working.

Pulling and pushing can be difficult for a pregnant woman and during the last half of pregnancy, should be done as little as possible.

Breaks. It must be possible for a pregnant woman to hold short breaks during the working day as required.

Biological/Infectious effects

When working with animals the risk assessment must evaluate specifically whether there is a particular danger to the pregnant woman and/or the unborn child. With regard to infections that can be transmitted from animals to humans it is particularly toxoplasmosis, Q fever and ornithosis (psittacosis), which may pose a danger.

Avoid working with **biological agents** (bacteria, viruses, amniotic fluids, etc.) that are especially dangerous for pregnant women if this cannot be done without them.

Chemical impacts

Use the Kemibrug chemicals portal to review the substances and materials that pregnant women work with and assess whether changes should be made to a pregnant woman's work routines if she uses substances or materials and/or whether there are substances and materials which she must not work with, if her work cannot be done without affecting her. Special attention should be paid here to working with substances marked with the risk phrases below. The European Union has implemented H-phrases (Hazard Statements) through the CLP Regulation. However, the old system of R-phrases will continue to be used in parallel until 2015 and attention must therefore be directed towards both phrases during the transitional period.

- R39: Danger of very serious irreversible effects
- R40: Possible risk of irreversible effects
- R45: May cause cancer

- R46: May cause heritable genetic damage
- R48: Danger of serious damage to health by prolonged exposure
- R49: May cause cancer by inhalation
- R60: May impair fertility
- R61: May cause harm to the unborn child
- R62: Possible risk of impaired fertility
- R63: Possible risk of harm to the unborn child.
- R64: May cause harm to breast-fed babies
- R68: Possible risks of irreversible effects
- H340: May cause genetic defects
- H341: Suspected of causing genetic defects
- H350: May cause cancer
- H351i: May cause cancer by inhalation.
- H351: Suspected of causing cancer
- 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
- H370: Causes damage to organs
- H371: May cause damage to organs

In the working environment of pregnant and breastfeeding, special attention should also be made to substances or materials that are proven to be absorbed through the skin. This applies to the following R- and H-phrases:

- R21: Harmful in contact with skin
- R24: Toxic in contact with skin
- R27: Very toxic in contact with skin
- R39/24: Toxic: danger of very serious irreversible effects in contact with skin
- R39/27: Very toxic: danger of very serious irreversible effects in contact with skin
- R48/21: Harmful: danger of serious damage to health by prolonged exposure in contact with skin
- R48/24: Toxic: danger of serious damage to health by prolonged exposure in contact with skin
- R68/21: Harmful: possible risk of irreversible effects in contact with skin
- H310: Fatal in contact with skin
- H311: Toxic in contact with skin
- H312: Harmful in contact with skin
- H370: Causes damage to organs
- H371: May cause damage to organs
- H372: Causes damage to organs through prolonged or repeated exposure
- H373: May cause damage to organs through prolonged or repeated exposure

Working with the above in powder form and with volatile substances should be avoided. Substances and materials marked with other risk phrases may have effects to which the unborn child's cells may

be sensitive. So a specific assessment must also be made when a pregnant woman is working with or is exposed to the following substances and materials:

- Substances that affect hormones.
- Substances covered by Danish Working Environment Authority Executive Order nr. 908 on Measures to Protect Workers from the Risks related to Exposure to Carcinogenic Substances and Materials at Work.
- Volatile substances and organic solvents.
- Pesticides/herbicides
- Heavy metals.
- Anaesthetic gases
- Suffocating gases.