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Pregnancy and Pregnancy Risk Assessments

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BACKGROUND



Staff (including agency and temporary) contractors, students, apprentices, work experience placements and volunteers have the right to be protected from harm.

The Health Board must assess risks and implement control measures so far as is reasonably practicable to protect all staff groups. Employees are under no legal obligation to notify the employer that they are a new or expectant mother.





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BACKGROUND



Pregnancy should be regarded as part of everyday life and therefore is not equated with ill-health. However, on occasion the workplace conditions and/or process may pose a hazard to the expectant, new or nursing mother and this may be compounded by pregnancy related health conditions.

Those risks which may impact on any new or expectant mother may also impact on women of child bearing age and must be adequately reflected in the local workplace risk assessment.

Employers are required to carry out a risk assessment and evaluation of all of the significant hazards which may be faced by new or expected mothers within the work place.





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BACKGROUND



Employers are responsible for providing a safe working environment while effectively managing risks to the health and safety of all employees through risk assessments.

Pregnancy is not a static condition and as the pregnancy develops it will be necessary to review the original assessment in the light of changing circumstances. The worker herself should be made aware of the need to report to her line manager any difficulties she may be experiencing or special requirements, e.g. periodic rest periods.

An employee does not have to tell the manager they are a new or expectant mother, but it is in their interests to let managers know so they can make any necessary changes to support them, from adjusting working conditions to maternity pay.





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WHAT IS A RISK?



A risk is the likelihood that a hazard will actually cause adverse effects or harm, together with a measure of the severity or impact (consequences) that this will have





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RISK ASSESSMENT



A risk assessment is a careful examination of the harm which could be caused through any work activity.





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RISK ASSESSMENT



When an employee has informed a manager in writing that they are a new or expectant mother, managers should immediately check existing workplace risk assessments for any known risks that could affect them. In doing this they must take account of any medical recommendations provided by their GP or midwife.



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ACTIONS FOLLOWING RISK ASSESSMENT



Action 1 – Adjust her working conditions or hours to remove the risk.

Action 2 – Give her suitable alternative work on the same terms and conditions

The Employment Rights Act states that suitable alternative work should be offered, where appropriate, before any suspension from work. This alternative should be on the same terms and conditions, including pay.

Action 3 – Suspend your employee on paid leave for as long as necessary to protect the health and safety of her and her child

Regardless of whether your risk assessment review identified risk, employers have a legal duty to revisit, review and revise the general risk assessment if they suspect it is no longer valid or there have been significant changes to anything it relates to (including employees). Having regular discussions with a new or expectant mother is an important way to monitor any changes and address any concerns about health and safety. Depending on the work involved, this might mean ongoing reviews for a pregnant worker because their dexterity, agility, co-ordination, speed of movement and reach could be impaired as their size increases. Working conditions can also present a risk to mother and child at different pregnancy stages.

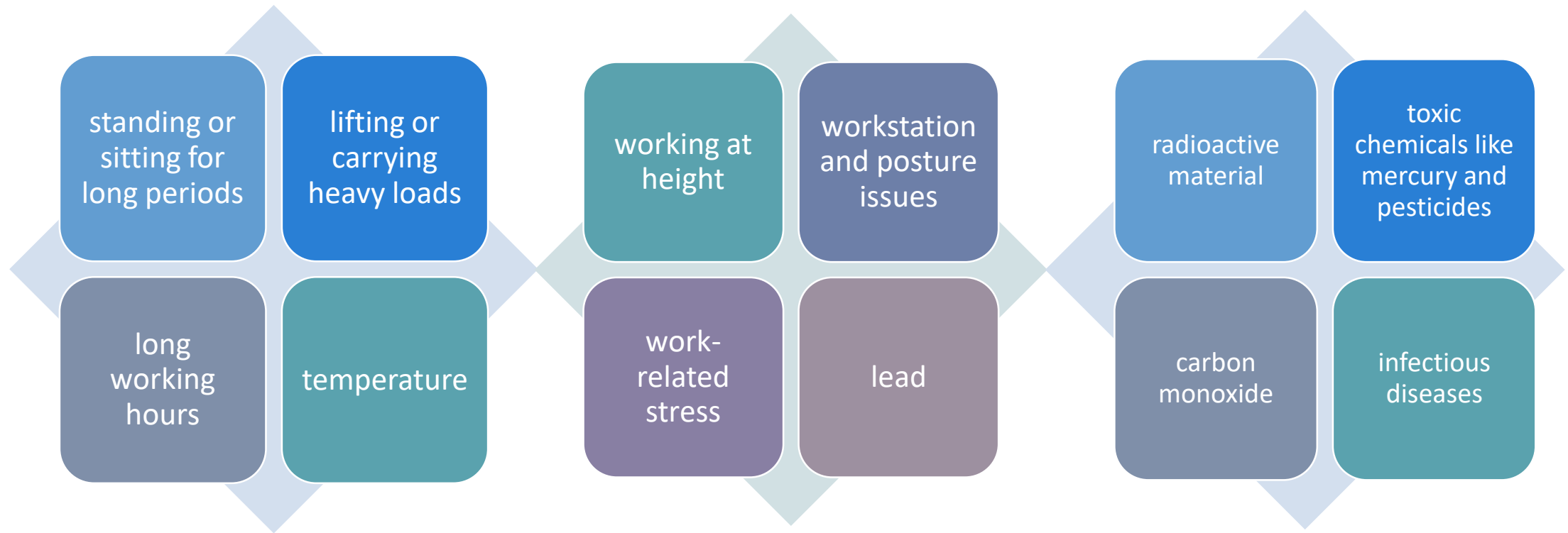


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RISKS FOR NEW AND EXPECTANT MOTHERS





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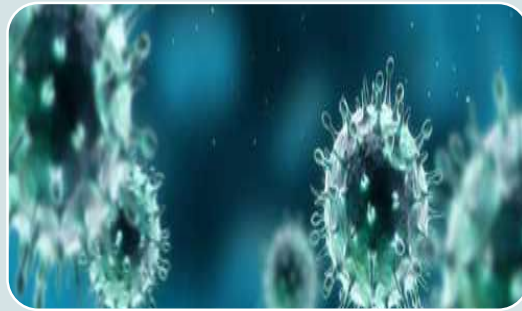
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RISKS WITHIN HEALTHCARE



Anaesthetic
Gases



Biological
Agents



Cytotoxic
Drugs



Chemicals



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RISKS WITHIN HEALTHCARE



Ionising
Radiation



Moving
and
Handling



Violence
and
Aggression



Night
Work



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PREGNANCY AND COVID-19

Employers should adopt an individualised approach for pregnant workers through the occupational health risk assessment process. Discussions with pregnant workers should take place at an early stage so you can co-produce the risk assessment, keeping it under review throughout the pregnancy to ensure appropriate mitigations are put in place in a timely manner.

Vaccination against coronavirus continues to be extremely important in providing protection for pregnant workers and should be promoted as part of this process. This also applies to other vaccine preventable diseases, especially flu. In undertaking the risk assessment process, alongside the individual's vaccination status, the process will need to consider the relevance of any underlying health conditions, and the employee's specific role.

If as part of this process, it is determined that a pregnant employee could not continue in their current role or reasonably be assigned other duties employers should suspend pregnant workers on full pay. This is in line with normal requirements.



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REFERRAL TO OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH



Pregnant Employees should be referred to Occupational Health

If a risk is identified and advise or alternative duties is required.

If the Manger has concerns about supporting the employee to continue at work.

If the employee has concerns about remaining in work during pregnancy



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BREASTFEEDING



On receipt of a written notification that a new mother wishes to breastfeed on their return to work, managers must ensure;

- The New and Expectant Mother's Risk Assessment is reviewed.
- Arrangements are made to provide a private, healthy and secure environment for nursing mothers to express and store milk (a toilet would not be deemed appropriate).
- Easy access to hand washing facilities.
- Reasonable paid breaks to be agreed to enable milk to be expressed (general provision for these breaks are 15 – 20 minutes)



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ANY QUESTIONS?

