

# Health at work during pregnancy

## 6. Health and safety assessments

By law, your employer must have a general health and safety risk assessment for all employees in their workplace.

This risk assessment should also specifically cover any risks for employees of childbearing age. These include people who are pregnant and new mothers.

Find out more from the [Health and Safety Executive \(HSE\)](#).

## Changing your work duties for your pregnancy

If your job has a health and safety risk to you and your unborn baby, your employer must remove the risk for you.

This might include temporarily changing your job to something more suitable.

For example, if your job involves heavy lifting or handling dangerous chemicals, your employer might be able to move you to a desk-based job in the office.

The terms of your contract should not change, for example your pay needs to be the same.

If it's not possible to remove the health and safety risk to you and your unborn baby, your employer might have to suspend you on full pay until the risk is removed or until your maternity leave starts.

If the suspension runs into the 4 weeks before you're due to give birth, your maternity pay and leave will start automatically the day after your first day off.

### **If you work through an agency**

If the job you're doing is not suitable for health and safety reasons while you're pregnant, your agency should find you another job or give you paid time off for the length of the original assignment.

## If you're having a difficult pregnancy

You should talk with your employer if you're having difficulties in your pregnancy and it's affecting your work, for example:

- severe morning sickness
- pain
- mental health issues

You could ask for a change to your working arrangements, for example:

- different start and finish times

- an occupational health assessment
- time working from home
- extra breaks for when you're feeling unwell

If you want to make more permanent changes to your job, you can [make a flexible working request](#).

You can also get advice and support from your health and safety representative or trade union representative, if you have one.

## If you're off sick

It's against the law for your employer to treat you unfairly because of any time off you need to take for your pregnancy.

If you're off work because of your pregnancy in the 4 weeks before your baby is due, by law your maternity leave and pay will start automatically the day after your first day off. If you do not want this to happen, you can talk with your employer.

If you're off sick and it's not related to your pregnancy, it's treated the same as any other [sickness absence](#).