

COVID-19

# COVID-19 and pregnant employees:

a Health & Safety  
guide for employers



Navigating change with Citation's Health & Safety experts.



**Citation**

## COVID-19:

# COVID-19 and pregnant employees: a Health & Safety guide for employers

Since the start of the coronavirus pandemic, employers have had the challenge of managing the risks of COVID-19 at work, including how best to protect vulnerable groups. One of these vulnerable groups is pregnant employees.

This guide takes a look at what the legal requirements are from a Health & Safety point of view as well as outlining some initial considerations you need to make as an employer.



## What do the regulations say?

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, employers had legal responsibilities for protecting new and expectant mothers at work which included identifying which work activities they carry out might affect them and how.

The **Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999**: (Regs. 16 - 18) places an absolute duty on the employer, who must:



- ⊗ Be notified by new or expectant mothers that they're pregnant, have given birth within the last six months or are breastfeeding.
- ⊗ Undertake a suitable and sufficient risk assessment, specific to new and expectant mothers.
- ⊗ Obtain certificates from a registered medical practitioner - if appropriate - that shows that it is necessary for her health or safety that she should not be at work for any period, or that she should not work night shifts.

## Why are new and expectant mothers classed as clinically vulnerable to COVID-19?

Information from the Royal College of Obstetricians & Gynaecologists (RCOG) says that pregnant women are no more likely to become seriously unwell from COVID-19, but pregnant women have been included in the list of people at moderate risk (clinically vulnerable) as a precaution.

Pregnant women can sometimes be at more risk from viruses like flu and whilst it's not clear what the effects of coronavirus are on pregnant women it's better to take extra precautions



## Practical tips for employers

Considering both the regulations and government guidance on COVID-19, here are some practical steps to take to protect new and expectant mothers in your workplace.

## Medical notification

- X

Make sure you use any medical information provided on underlying medical conditions that may affect a pregnant employee (e.g asthma, heart conditions etc) to inform your risk assessment.
- X

For employees in higher risk groups who are pregnant, shielding letters will include applicable information when establishing if your pregnant employee can attend the workplace or not.
- X

Remember to include any additional information for pregnant Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority (BAME) employees.

## Conducting your risk assessment

Your risk assessment aims to reduce the risk to the new and expectant mother to as low as reasonably practicable. Remember to:

- X

Assess the working environment and work activities that your pregnant employees undertakes on a regular basis.
- X

If you identify something that can cause harm to the new or expectant mother or their baby, you must take steps to reduce the risk.
- X

Important! Always consult with your pregnant employee throughout the risk assessment process.



### REMEMBER

Pregnant employees should follow the latest government guidance on staying safe and avoid anyone showing symptoms of COVID-19. It's advised that pregnant women should follow social distancing particularly in the third trimester (more than 28 weeks' pregnant).



### Work with Citation

Having trouble completing your risk assessments? Citation can be by your side to advise. Just call our team on **0345 844 1111** today to find out how we can help you.

## COVID-19 risks in the workplace and pregnant women



**REMEMBER:** Current government advice is that pregnant women who can work from home should do so.



An employers' aim should be to remove or manage risks.



Reducing the risks includes offering your pregnant employee alternative suitable work including, where possible, working from home.



To ensure their safety at home, you should follow a DSE and workstation assessment.



Where homeworking isn't possible or suitable, consider if measures in the workplace are enough or if there are additional precautions that need to be put in place. For example, if the pregnant woman works in a nursery, you might assign them temporary duties for them to carry out, so they work away from others.



### REMEMBER

Consult with an Employment Law expert if you're making reasonable adjustments like this or want to know the options when alternative work cannot be found, as well as managing other aspects of pregnant workers such as maternity leave.

### NEED EMPLOYMENT LAW ADVICE?

Citation's teams are made up of Health & Safety and Employment Law experts - so when you work with us, you have professionals on the other end of a phone call 24/7. Interested in working with us? Just give the team a call on

**0345 844 1111**

The government has produced workplace guidance for different sectors on managing COVID-19 transmission and expects employers to carry out an assessment of the risks to everyone, including vulnerable groups.

Use your COVID-19 secure risk assessment as a starting point when assessing the risks to pregnant employees, considering what measures you've put in place for maintaining social distancing, hand hygiene and respiratory hygiene.



## When to review your risk assessment

As with reviewing any risk assessment, the measures in place to protect new and expectant mothers should be reviewed regularly. It's recommended a review is carried out each trimester (and more frequently if required) because a pregnant employee's body and baby change during this time and the level of risk they're exposed to at work can also change.

The government in England currently advises that a more precautionary approach is taken for women 28+ weeks pregnant because the risk of becoming severely ill and of pre-term birth is higher if they contract COVID-19. It's recommended that where possible, they work from home.



## How can Citation help?

These are challenging times for employees, business owners and employers. Throughout the pandemic, our team of Health & Safety experts have helped thousands of clients get on top of their regulatory responsibilities and duties.

If you're not yet a client of ours and you want the advice and backing of our team, simply give us a call on **0345 844 1111** to talk through your business needs. Or fill out your details in our call-back form [here](#) and we'll be in touch.



Citation

