

Aberystwyth University. Safety Management. Standard Practice Instruction	Safety information for new or expectant mothers (risk assessment review).	Ref: S 006 Issue: 4.1 Page: 1 of 2 Date Issued: 6 th Oct, 2009
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1.0 Purpose

To give information on the extra hazards associated with work that may be relevant to new and expectant mothers, and the actions to be taken to assess and mitigate the risks involved.

2.0 Scope

All women of child-bearing potential who are members of the University.

3.0 Responsibility

- 3.1 Heads of Departments, Managers and Supervisors (to ensure assessments and adjustments to work are carried out).
- 3.2 Female members of the University of child-bearing potential (to take responsibility for seeking advice and following guidance).

4.0 Practice

- 4.1 The expectant mother to review her work activities in consultation with her manager/supervisor and/or departmental Safety Officer (where this may present personal difficulty, the individual is urged to discuss the matter with her GP at the earliest opportunity). The risk assessment is to be documented on form S006F1 and the outcomes communicated to all those concerned.

Where the expectant mother is an undergraduate student, advice can also be sought from the Medical Centre, Student Support Services and the Students Union

Where the expectant mother is an employee, notification to HR is needed in writing at least 15 weeks before the expected week of childbirth (see HR procedure: 'Maternity Leave').

The new or expectant mother should read the HSE leaflet INDG373 (see refs), which will be sent out by HR, or can be obtained from the DSO or viewed on the AU HS&E website.

Issues to be considered in the review of the risk assessment are given in form S006F1. The outcome of the risk assessment may indicate an adjustment in work activities to remove the hazard for the period of pregnancy and breast-feeding. Where this is not possible for operational or research reasons, then the individual will need to be found alternative duties of an appropriate nature.

4.2 Teratogens and Embryotoxins

Some substances and organisms are well known as being able to cause damage to the unborn child, and can be embryotoxic (notably in the very early stages of pregnancy). The substances are coded with certain 'risk phrases' – these and the hazardous organisms are noted in form S006F1. Pregnant individuals, or those attempting to become pregnant, should not work with these substances or organisms.

There is some evidence that certain substances commonly found in laboratories can be embryotoxic – even though they have not been assigned teratogenic or similar

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risk phrases. It appears that these substances can affect a pregnancy, but are much less potent than the classified substances. Normal Good Laboratory Practice is regarded as sufficient protection against any embryotoxic effects of these substances (which typically have other hazardous properties, protection measures for which are required under COSHH).

4.3 Guidance on Reviewing Risk Assessments

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require employers to carry out "suitable and sufficient" risk assessments, which take into consideration new and expectant mothers. As the risk may increase when a woman is a new or expectant mother, then existing risk assessments must be reviewed and subject to additional consideration (note that risks include those to the unborn child or the child of a woman who is still breastfeeding, not just risks to the mother herself).

The HSE publication "New and expectant mothers at work – A guide for employers" HSG122 (2002) identifies specific topics which will require additional assessment. These are included in the assessment form S006F1

4.4 Records and Review

The completed risk assessment should be stored in the Department (e.g. in the women's personnel file) and reviewed at suitable intervals during the pregnancy or period of nursing, and any adjustments made as necessary.

Records should be retained for 4 years.

5.0 References

HSE (1999). Management of health and safety at work, Approved code of practice L21

HSE (2002). New and expectant mothers at work – A guide for employers, HSG122

HSE (2003). A guide for new and expectant mothers who work, INDG373
<http://www.aber.ac.uk/safety-environment/docs/protected/indg373.pdf>

AU SPI S006F1 (2004) Risk assessment checklist for new or expectant mothers.

AU HR Department - Maternity Leave
<http://www.aber.ac.uk/en/hr/tandc/maternity/>

6.0 Document Update Log

4.1 6th October, 2009 = Update to reflect change of university and departmental names.