

TEMPLATE FOR VIDCAST: MATERNITY (part 2)

INTRODUCTION

I'm **Darnette Cowan, Assistant Safety Adviser** from Human Resources, the Health & Safety Unit. The topic for my VIDCAST is **Maternity**.

TOPIC contd.

As an employer we have a duty of care to our employees and their child or children. If an employee returns to work after childbirth this duty continues to apply for up to six months, or for the duration of breast feeding, whichever is the longer.

As soon as your employee informs you they are pregnant, you should notify HR who will contact a member of the team in the H&S Unit. When we receive the notification, we will arrange to meet with the employee to look at their work area and make an assessment of the possible risks arising from the workplace. This assessment will consider the following:

- Firstly, we look at the potential hazards in the work area and assess the risks for someone who is pregnant. Between us and the employee we decide on the most effective way in which both mother and unborn children or children can be protected.
- Secondly, we consider how the various changes in the employees body and the complications of pregnancy impact on work, and what modifications need to be made so that they can continue to at least do the core aspects of your job.

Typically hazards are classified as physical, chemical biological or ergonomic. Examples of problems might be: for staff that work in offices pregnancy will almost certainly impact the layout of the workstation, lifting and carrying of bulky items becomes problematic as the employees shape and size changes employees may experience reduced stamina and may need more rest breaks.

As part of the process, you should regularly monitor and review the assessment of the employee's workplace, taking into account possible risks that may occur at different stages of pregnancy. For example, dexterity, agility, co-ordination, speed of movement and reach may be impaired because of increased size as the pregnancy progresses. These changes – albeit normal – need to be managed.

As mentioned earlier, the legislation that protects women during pregnancy also extends to any breast feeding period. If your employee needs to breast feed, or express milk, while at work please contact me or one of my colleagues. We have a room allocated for this purpose– an access code number can be given to your employee.