

Safe Pregnancy At Work

If you are pregnant, breastfeeding, or trying to conceive a child, managing any potential hazards in your workplace is important. The following will help guide you in reducing your risks and help promote a healthy pregnancy while you're at work.

Potential Workplace Hazards

Chemical Exposure

Many chemicals have the potential to be harmful to reproduction or the developing fetus, though few are found at the University in high levels. Common chemicals of concern are:

- Many pharmaceutical drugs, including chemotherapeutic drugs and hormonal drugs
- Anesthetic gases (such as isoflurane)
- Pesticides
- Cleaning agents, if exposed to concentrated, large amounts
- Solvents

Radiation

High exposures to radiation are a known hazard for pregnancy and conception. However, the radiation exposures in research and most medical settings are quite low. If you are pregnant, you have the option to [declare your pregnancy in writing](#) to your supervisor, which will require more protective limits on your exposure to radiation during your pregnancy. The [UHS Radiation Safety department](#) will work with you and your supervisor to provide relevant training and help you closely monitor your exposure throughout your pregnancy. You can refer to the [University Policy on Declared Pregnant Radiation Workers](#) for more information.

Biological Hazards

If you work with biological materials, certain infectious materials are known to be more harmful during pregnancy. These include:

- *Toxoplasma gondii* (causes toxoplasmosis)
- Listeria



- Cytomegalovirus
- Zika virus
- Hepatitis viruses
- Rubella and measles viruses
- Varicella zoster virus

Other Workplace Hazards

Heavy lifting is a common concern for pregnant persons. While the University does not have specific guidelines, your personal physician can provide guidance on safe lifting limits, or you can consult with our occupational health physicians if needed.

Precautions You Can Take

- If you are not ready to discuss your reproductive plans with your supervisor, you can contact University Health & Safety at (612) 626-6002 for initial assistance.
- Work with your supervisor to determine ways to minimize your exposure to hazards. These may include:
 - Reassignment of job duties, or swapping tasks with another person
 - Minimizing participation in certain tasks
 - Replacing higher-hazard chemicals with lower-hazard ones
 - Increasing focus on a different area of your work during your pregnancy
- Continue strong personal hygiene practices, such as handwashing, wearing gloves when necessary,

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and avoiding eating/drinking in lab or animal care areas

- Wear personal protective equipment, such as gloves or a respirator, as needed
 - If you would like to use a respirator, contact University Health & Safety to discuss your options. We can assist you in evaluating your exposure risk and getting you a respirator if needed.
- Use your own judgement and comfort level to determine what tasks you are comfortable with doing. If you are uncomfortable doing a task, work with your supervisor to determine other options, or contact University Health & Safety for assistance.
- Contact University Health & Safety at (612) 626-6002 if you have any questions or concerns about the hazards in your work area. We can provide consultation, assess any hazards in your area, and work with you to reduce any risks.

Further Questions

- Your personal physician or obstetrician should be your primary point of contact for any concerns with your pregnancy, breastfeed, or pre-conception. They know your unique medical situation and will be able to provide the best recommendations.
- Employee workers who are pregnant, planning to become pregnant, or wish to discuss concerns regarding fertility may set up an appointment with the University's occupational health provider. Refer to our website on [Clinical Services](#) for information on scheduling an appointment.
- Non-employee workers (e.g., students) may contact the UHS Occupational Health department at (612) 626-5008 or uhs@umn.edu for confidential assistance in getting task-specific safety guidance.
- If work restrictions are necessary, the University's contracted occupational health physician will provide written guidance, which the employee should

provide to their lab manager or supervisor. The occupational health physician may also be able to work with your personal physician or obstetrician to address any concerns you may have.

- Your area's research safety partner will also be able to assist you in answering any questions, or finding the appropriate resources. You can contact them directly, or call the UHS office at (612) 626-6002.

Other resources at the University may also be helpful to you, including:

- [Human Resources](#)
- [Disability Resource Center](#)
- [Student Parent Help Center](#)
- [UMN Lactation Resources](#)

Further Resources

Other resources and references that may be helpful to you include:

- [Pregnancy and Your Job from the National Institute for Occupational Health and Safety \(NIOSH\)](#)
- [NIOSH List of Antineoplastic And Other Hazardous Drugs List 2016](#)
- [NIOSH Information on Reproductive Health & Infectious Agents](#)
- [MotherToBaby—Fact Sheets on Common Exposures](#)
- [MotherToBaby: Reproductive Hazards of the Workplace—Tips for Job Safety](#)
- [MotherToBaby: Working as a Veterinary or Veterinary Technician during Pregnancy](#)
- [National Postdoctoral Association: A Postdoc's Guide to Pregnancy and Maternity Leave](#)
- [University of Wisconsin: Zoonotic Diseases & Pregnancy](#)