

# Occupational Health Service

## Covid-19 Guidelines for Pregnant Workers

### Introduction

This advice is for you if you are pregnant and working as an employee. This includes pregnant healthcare professionals. It will help you discuss with your line manager and occupational health team how best to ensure health and safety in the workplace.

If you are pregnant and have let your employer know in writing of your pregnancy, your employer should carry out a risk assessment. This may involve obtaining advice from the occupational health department. See the workplace risk assessment guidance for healthcare workers and for vulnerable people working in other industries.

Information contained in the RCOG/RCM guidance on coronavirus (COVID-19) in pregnancy should be used as the basis for a risk assessment.

Pregnant women of any gestation should not be required to continue working if this is not supported by the risk assessment. Pregnant women require special consideration as contained in government guides for different industries.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-pregnant-employees/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-pregnant-employees>

### What has changed?

The Isle of Man Government has announced that the measures put in place under Plan B will be lifted. This means:

The government is no longer asking people to work from home if they can – people should now talk to their employers to agree arrangements to return to the office

From 27 January, there is no longer a legal requirement to wear a face covering – the government suggests that you continue to wear a face covering in crowded and enclosed spaces where you may come into contact with other people you do not normally meet.

You should continue to follow all of the guidance on this page to keep yourself and others safe.

Clinically extremely vulnerable, including women who are pregnant with significant congenital or acquired heart disease, are not advised to shield.

People on the Highest Risk List to include pregnant women have been advised to follow the same measures and guidance as the rest of the population, including on going into the workplace.

### Vaccination

COVID-19 vaccines are strongly recommended in pregnancy. On 16 December 2021, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) announced that pregnant women would be moved into **priority group 6 alongside adults under the age of 65 who have long term health**

**conditions**, and urged pregnant women to get their first and second dose as soon as possible, as well as their booster jabs.

Vaccination is the best way to protect against the known risks of COVID-19 in pregnancy for both women and babies, including admission of the woman to intensive care and premature birth of the baby. The vaccine is considered to be safe and effective at any stage of pregnancy. Women who find out they are pregnant after their first dose do not need to delay their second dose. Pregnant women can book a second dose 8 weeks after their first dose. Similarly, women who become eligible for a booster dose during pregnancy, having had their initial 2 doses prior to pregnancy, do not need to delay the booster.

Unvaccinated or not fully vaccinated pregnant women are at an increased risk of becoming severely ill and of pre-term birth if they contract COVID-19.

Having a COVID-19 vaccine will not remove the requirement for employers to carry out a risk assessment for pregnant employees, which should follow the rules set out in this government guidance.

### **Less than 26 weeks pregnant**

*The following recommendations apply for pregnant women who are less than 26 weeks pregnant*

All pregnant workers must undertake a workplace risk assessment with their employer.

The risk assessment should be conducted as soon as the employee notifies their employer in writing that they are pregnant. Employers should regularly review the risk assessment as the employee's pregnancy develops or if the workplace or work conditions change.

Where a significant health and safety risk is identified for pregnant workers, employers should adjust the working conditions or hours to remove the risk, where reasonably practicable to do so, or offer alternative work on the same terms and conditions. If this cannot be done, employers should suspend pregnant workers on full pay. This is in line with normal requirements.

Occupational health advice should be sought where necessary.

*See further advice on health and safety for pregnant workers from HSE:*

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/working-safely/index.htm>

### **26 weeks pregnant and beyond**

*The following recommendations apply for pregnant women who are 26 weeks pregnant and beyond*

Given the clinical data that suggests that **risk of complications from COVID-19 increase from around 26 weeks' gestation**, further considerations should be made from this stage. However, general advice on reducing risk of COVID-19 infection applies at all gestations.

All pregnant workers must undertake a workplace risk assessment with their employer. Pregnant workers should continue working only if the risk assessment advises it is safe to do so after suitable control measures have been put in place. Pregnant workers should be involved in the risk

assessment process and be satisfied that their continued working in the area does not put them or their baby at risk.

Pregnant workers should be supported by their employer with appropriate risk mitigations in line with recommendations provided by the workplace risk assessment. Employers should make sure the controls identified by a risk assessment for example adequate ventilation, good hygiene and cleaning, are applied strictly.

Where a significant health and safety risk is identified for pregnant workers, employers should adjust the working conditions or hours to remove the risk, where reasonably practicable to do so, or offer alternative work on the same terms and conditions. If this cannot be done, employers should suspend pregnant workers on full pay. This is in line with normal requirements.

Employers should also offer support by having individual discussions around pregnant workers concerns.

Some higher risk occupations such as those with greater public contact to COVID-19 (including those in some health and care settings) may carry a higher risk of exposure to the virus. In health and care settings this may include not working in specific higher risk areas or higher risk procedures as summarised in the guidance on infection prevention and control.

Pregnant workers who continue to come into work should also consider taking lateral flow tests regularly. Lateral flow tests (LFT) are no longer free unless one is health and social care worker, a patient attending hospital for a procedure or one is considered to be very high risk of serious illness from Covid-19 infection.

*See further advice on health and safety for pregnant workers and protecting new and expectant mothers at work from the Health and Safety Executive (link below).*

## **Conclusion**

The government has announced that the measures put in place under Plan B will be lifted.

The government is no longer asking people to work from home if they can. People should now talk to their employers to agree arrangements to return to the office.

There is no longer a legal requirement to wear a face covering. The government suggests that you continue to wear a face covering in crowded and enclosed spaces where you may come into contact with other people you do not normally meet.

This guidance supports both employers and pregnant women with the risks associated with COVID-19 at work, following the decision to place pregnant women in a high-risk category.

The guidance is regularly reviewed and may be revised, so employers will want to ensure they are referring to the most up-to-date guidance for their sector.

The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, the Royal College of Midwives and the Faculty of Occupational Medicine will continue to act as clinical advisers to government on any occupational health advice for pregnant women during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **Further Information**

### **Pregnancy and COVID-19 - NHS website:**

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/people-at-higher-risk/pregnancy-and-coronavirus/>

### **HSE guidance on protecting new and expectant mothers at work:**

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/mothers/>

### **HSE Risk Assessment template**

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/risk/risk-assessment-template-and-examples.htm>

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## Appendix

### COVID Risk Assessment Form

Risk factors that can be used to evaluate the residual risk of COVID-19 transmission through work activities

<b>Framework for workplace COVID-19 risk</b>		Based on risk after control measures are implemented			
<b>Risk ID</b>	<b>Risk factors</b>	Low	Standard	Medium	High
1	Patient care/Individuals cared for in the community/Public facing				
2	Ability to maintain social distancing at work >2m				
3	Number of different people sharing the workplace				
4	Travel to and from work				
5	Workplace entry and exit				
6	Availability and use of PPE				
7	Ability to maintain hand hygiene				
8	Workplace environment cleanliness control				
9	Ability to avoid symptomatic people				
10	Covid vaccination		Vaccinated	Partially vaccinated	Unvaccinated