

Working During Pregnancy

Introduction:

Being pregnant shouldn't stop you from working or from progressing at work. A pregnant woman can continue to work as long as she can balance her health and her work to maintain her physical and mental wellbeing for the sake of her child. If you have a risk free office job, there's no reason to be concerned. However, if your job puts you at risk during your pregnancy, don't hesitate to ask your superior to reduce your workload or to change your responsibilities. Risks can include:

- Standing for long periods of time
- Lifting or pushing heavy weights
- Extensive traveling most of the time
- Climbing up and down stairs
- Working in places exposed to radiology (e.g. radiology rooms).
- Working in areas exposed to chemical materials as some chemicals may cause a miscarriage or birth defects.
- Working for long hours without rest. This can cause a miscarriage, preterm labor, or a low birth weight.
- Working in an area with noises exceeding 90 decibels (e.g. airport terminal, noisy electric equipment) as loud noises have been linked to low birth weights.

Office tasks:

Most office tasks are safe for pregnant women. However, the risk of fluid retention from sitting down for long periods may cause some problems (e.g. swelling in the wrists and inability to type on a keyboard). We therefore advise you to:

- Take intermittent breaks and walk to improve blood flow and reduce swelling.
- Use a comfortable chair and a lumbar support cushion.
- Place your hands and arms correctly when using a computer.
- Avoid crossing your legs since it can cut off circulation.

If your work requires you to stand up repeatedly, you may experience pain in your back and your legs, especially during your third trimester. Standing for long periods of time can reduce blood flow to the fetus and undermine its growth.

However, if you must stand-up, keep these tips in mind:

- Take intermittent breaks to sit down.
- Wear comfortable shoes with good foam support.
- Ask to be permitted to sit down while you work rather than stand up.

Problems you may face while working:

1. Fatigue and exhaustion: You may feel particularly tired during your first trimester, when you are more likely to feel nauseous or continuously sleepy, or during your last trimester when your body gains more weight. To reduce fatigue and exhaustion:

- Keep some snacks with you, choosing foods that reduce your nausea and avoiding those that increase it.
- Sleep early and avoid staying up late or drinking stimulants at night.
- Balance sitting down and moving to help reduce feelings of exhaustion.
- Get some rest in the open air or near a window.
- Use comfortable lumbar support cushions or choose a comfortable armchair.

2. Stress and anxiety: Try to control your reactions as much as possible. Try to avoid stress and take short breaks for several minutes to walk and breathe.

Shoes:

When a woman is pregnant, her body retains fluids because of several factors. This retention may lead to some swelling and puffiness in the feet, resulting in an increase in shoe sizes. Pregnant women should therefore choose wide comfortable shoes (e.g. trainers) that facilitate movement. Avoid tight shoes or shoes with high heels.

If your work requires you to sit down for long periods of time, it is best to lift your feet on a chair or a foot stool to reduce fluid retention in the lower part of the legs and the feet.

Clinical Health Education Department
For more information, please contact us by email on:
Hpromotion@moh.gov.sa

