

**6. Occupational health  
advice for employers  
and pregnant women  
during the COVID-19  
pandemic**

## 6. Occupational health advice for employers and pregnant women during the COVID-19 pandemic

Everyone in the UK is advised to follow guidance on social distancing measures to reduce social interaction between people in order to lessen the transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19).

Latest guidance recommends that pregnant women under 28 weeks' gestation (in the first and second trimester of pregnancy) with no underlying health conditions, should follow the guidance on social distancing in the same way as the general population. Subject to taking social distancing precautions in the work environment, in the same way as other colleagues, pregnant women under 28 weeks gestation may continue to work as normal.

However pregnant women from 28 weeks' gestation (in the third trimester of pregnancy), and pregnant women with underlying health conditions, such as lung or heart disease, may experience more severe symptoms of the virus and are therefore advised to take a more precautionary approach and are strongly advised to follow social distancing advice.

This guidance sets out how working pregnant women in healthcare settings can achieve the recommendations for social distancing. Some of this advice will also be relevant to pregnant workers in a range of other work settings.

### 6.1 Healthcare workers prior to 28 weeks' gestation

It may not be possible to completely avoid caring for all patients with COVID-19. As for all healthcare workers, use of PPE and risk assessments according to current guidance will provide pregnant workers with protection from infection. The arrival of rapid COVID-19 testing will significantly assist in organising care provision, and this guidance will be updated appropriately when such tests are commonly available.

Some working environments (e.g. operating theatres, respiratory wards and intensive care/high dependency units) carry a higher risk for pregnant women of exposure to the virus through the greater number of AGPs performed. These procedures are summarised in the publication [Guidance on Infection Prevention and Control](#). When caring for suspected or COVID-19 patients all healthcare workers in these settings are recommended to use appropriate PPE. Where possible, pregnant women are advised to avoid working in these areas with suspected or COVID-19 patients.

## 6.2 Healthcare workers after 28 weeks' gestation or with underlying health conditions

For pregnant women after 28 weeks' gestation, or with underlying health conditions such as heart or lung disease, a more precautionary approach is advised. Women in this category should work from home where possible, avoid contact with anyone with symptoms of COVID-19, and significantly reduce unnecessary social contact. For many healthcare workers, this may present opportunities to work flexibly in a different capacity, for example by undertaking telephone or videoconference consultations, or taking on administrative duties. All NHS employers should consider how to maximise the potential for homeworking given current relaxation of [NHS Information Governance](#) requirements, wherever possible.

Staff in this risk group who have chosen not to follow government advice and attend the workplace must not be deployed in roles where they are working with patients. Services may want to consider deploying these staff to support other activities such as education or training needs (e.g. in IPC or simulation).

These measures will allow many pregnant healthcare workers to continue to make an active and valuable contribution to the workplace until the commencement of their maternity leave.