

Working During Pregnancy

Most women can safely continue working throughout their pregnancy. How long you continue working depends on the type of job you have. For example, secretaries, clerks, and managers are often able to sit during much of their work. Women with these kinds of jobs can usually work the full length of their pregnancy.

There are, however, some working conditions that may be hazardous in pregnancy. Consider the following guidelines to provide a safe working environment for you while you are pregnant.

- If you have a job that requires standing for long periods of time, you should take frequent rest breaks for 5-10 minutes every couple of hours. Take naps after work and get extra rest on your days off.
- If you climb stairs on the job, you should limit this to 6 to 8 times per shift, depending on the height of the stairs.
- You should avoid climbing ladders after 28 weeks gestation.
- Repetitive lifting should be limited to 25 pounds after 28 weeks gestation.
- Repetitive stooping or bending below the knee should be limited to 2 to 4 times per hour.

All of these job functions can cause problems for a pregnant woman. Other factors to consider are conditions of excessive heat and heavy labor. In addition, if you work at a job where you are exposed to hazardous chemicals, radiation, or infectious diseases, you should be cautious. Please discuss any of these conditions with your healthcare provider.

There may be certain factors in your medical history that increase the risk of complications during pregnancy. Examples include previous preterm delivery, heart disease, high blood pressure, or kidney problems. Your healthcare provider considers these factors when advising you on whether you should continue working while pregnant.

A note about sick leave: Many women wonder whether they can take sick leave during at least part of their pregnancy. Generally, employers pay sickness benefits to pregnant women only if they are unable to continue work because of a pregnancy complication. If a pregnancy is normal and uncomplicated, it is not considered to be an illness and you probably will not be eligible for sick leave. Check with your employer to find out exactly what benefits you have and when you can take maternity leave.