



## BASIC INFORMATION

### DESCRIPTION

- Women continue to work during pregnancy for a variety of reasons. The money earned and/or health benefits are needed, they don't want to interrupt careers any longer than necessary, they want to stay busy, and they enjoy their work.
- In a normal pregnancy, there are few restrictions concerning work, although it is beneficial to moderate activity and to allow for additional periods of rest. If you are not at risk for complications, you can probably continue to work up to your delivery date. In one large medical study, it was found that demanding and stressful work with long hours did not have an adverse effect on the pregnancy outcome.
- A pregnant woman will need to make the decision about working and for how long based upon her needs, the needs of her family, her health, the type of work being performed and the input from her doctor.
- The American Medical Association recommends the following for working pregnant women:
  - Take a break every few hours.
  - Take a longer meal break every four hours.
  - Drink plenty of fluids while on the job.
  - Vary work positions continuously, from sitting to standing and walking.
  - Minimize heavy lifting and bending.

### MATERNITY LEAVE

Maternity leave traditionally runs from one month before the expected delivery date extending to 6 weeks after birth. These dates can vary depending on health, well-being and desires of the mother-to-be, the work involved, the employer's attitude, and any guidelines established by the health benefit provider. Some women work right up to the delivery date, while others feel that they want some transition time between their work and the baby's birth.

### STRESS

Physical and mental stress are a part of every woman's life. A certain amount of stress can give you more energy and make you more productive. Too much stress, however, can cause depression, headaches, tiredness, weight gain, changes in eating habits, and problems coping with everyday life. Stress even plays a role in how well a person can resist disease. There is still much to be learned about the effects of stress on pregnancy. It is important to eat well during pregnancy. Keep some healthy snacks at your desk or workplace. Try to rest during breaks at work and after work. Recent studies show that one-and-a-half hours of rest each day helps protect unborn babies by increasing uterine blood flow.

### USING A COMPUTER AT WORK

No link has yet been found between exposure to the electromagnetic field of video display terminals (VDTs) and risk to pregnant women. A pregnant woman using a computer should sit at arm's length away from the front of the computer screen. To minimize any physical discomfort and avoid the problems of sitting for long periods, take frequent work breaks, use detachable keyboards and adjustable chairs and tables. Also, use non-reflective glass on the screen, adjust the screen lighting and contrast, and have indirect lighting if possible.

### PHYSICAL DEMANDS OF WORK

The physical requirements of the work will play a role in determining how long to work. How physically demanding is the job and does the pregnancy interfere with accomplishing the work? Are there some modifications that can be made to accommodate the physical demands of the pregnancy? Advise your obstetric provider if the work involves:

- Heavy lifting, pulling or pushing.
- Climbing (stairs, poles or ladders).
- Bending below the waist.
- Shift changes.
- An added risk of accidents or falls.

### HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES AT WORK

Some work involves being around hazardous substances. Always discuss these possibilities with the doctor on your first prenatal visit. It may be recommended that you transfer to a less hazardous work area.

### WORK THAT REQUIRES STANDING

- For pregnant women who stand for long periods, there are no set times for discontinuing the work. There are some concerns about the effect of standing for long periods during the last months of pregnancy. In some cases, a woman may be permitted to work to delivery time, while others are advised to quit anywhere from the 24th to the 32nd week of pregnancy.
- If you do need to stand for long periods, keep one foot on a low stool with knee bent. This takes some of the pressure off the back. Wear support hose.

### SEDENTARY WORK

A woman in a sedentary job can usually work up to the delivery date without any threat to her well-being or the baby's health.



### NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

You or a family member is pregnant and working and has concerns about the effect the work may have on the pregnancy.