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Things You Should Know If You Are Pregnant

Working women are at special risk during pregnancy when the health hazards to which they are exposed are a threat to their unborn child. Employees are encouraged to tell supervisors as soon as possible when they become pregnant. In addition, pregnant employees should discuss their work environment and duties with their personal providers.

Pregnant personnel, without immunity to toxoplasmosis, should avoid contact with toxoplasma-infected animals, especially cats to prevent congenital Toxoplasma - infection. Cat feces should be avoided as well. Gloves should be worn when working in areas that may be contaminated with cat feces. Thorough hand washing after handling any potential source of infection is necessary.

Working with hazardous agents, in particular radiation and exposure to possible inhalation of toxic chemicals, during the first trimester of pregnancy should be avoided.

Radiation: Radiation is a physical hazard. Sources of ionizing radiation include both radioactive materials and radiation producing machines. The human embryo/fetus is much more sensitive to radiation than the adult. Results of fetal irradiation include genetic defects, mutations, and later development of leukemia.

It is strongly encouraged that a pregnant user of radiation declares herself pregnant in writing to the Radiation Safety Office, as soon as possible.

Chemical Hazards:

Formaldehyde

Formaldehyde is a liquid used primarily as a tissue preservative. Animal studies have shown formaldehyde to cause birth defects.

Anesthetic Gases

Over exposure of a pregnant woman to certain anesthetic gases can cause kidney disease, increased risk of abortion, and birth defects.

There are many other potent hazardous agents that pregnant women may be exposed to. Laboratories and facilities should provide employees with appropriate information on hazards present in each area. Guidelines for proper personnel protection (gloves, lab coats, masks, etc.) should also be made available. Pregnant women with concerns should contact their supervisor or UHS.