



WORKING DURING YOUR PREGNANCY

Can a woman work while she is pregnant?

If you are a normal, healthy woman with an uncomplicated pregnancy and a normally developing fetus and you work in a job that presents no greater hazard than those in daily life, you can usually keep working until labor begins. You can return to work usually around six weeks after your baby's birth.

What kind of work can I do?

Pregnant women can usually keep doing the same things they were used to doing before pregnancy. However, some things may be hard or risky. These include lifting over twenty pounds or occupation that may require very good balance.

During the first few months of pregnancy, you may feel dizzy, nauseated and tired. You may also be more sensitive to heat. If you feel these symptoms please ask your care provider for suggestions to help with these symptoms. Many women will feel more tired again at the end of your pregnancy. These are normal symptoms and discomforts of pregnancy and usually will not cause you to be disabled or not to work.

Can you explain pregnancy related disability?

Having a disability means that you are not able to work because of physical problems that interfere with your ability to perform your usual duties. Only your health care provider can decide whether your pregnancy is partially or totally disabling. A disability may fall into any of these three categories:

1. **Disability from the pregnancy itself.** Some women suffer side effects from pregnancy such as severe nausea, vomiting, or cervical problems which may cause a temporary disability. Your care provider will reevaluate you at regular intervals to determine when you may return to work.
2. **Disability related to complications of pregnancy:** More serious complications such as hypertension (high blood pressure), preterm labor, or heavy bleeding from placental problems may require this type of disability status. Some conditions such as heart disease, diabetes or chronic high blood pressure may also lead to this disability status.
3. **Disability related to job exposure:** Some disabilities are granted to the pregnant patient if the job requires exposure to high levels of substances that are known to be toxic to pregnant woman or their fetus.

What is the pregnancy discrimination act?

The Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978 was passed by Congress. It requires employers that offer medical disability benefits to treat pregnancy-related disabilities just like all other disabilities. In other words, if you are unable to work because of your pregnancy-related problems, your employer must give you the same rights as other employees temporarily disabled by illness or accident. If you are partially disabled by pregnancy and your employer regularly assigns lighter work to other partially disabled employees, the same must be done for you. If your employer guarantees that temporarily disabled workers can return to their jobs or a job of the

same level and salary, the same must be done for you. Unfortunately, many employers do not offer disability benefits at all for any conditions. Therefore, they are not obliged to provide disability benefits or leave for childbirth or complications of pregnancy. If no disability plan is offered where you work, you may qualify for unemployment or temporary disability benefits from your state. To find out about your state benefits and how to qualify, contact your Human Resources Department and your work or the state unemployment office.

Are many women disabled during pregnancy?

Total disability during pregnancy occurs for very few women. Others may be disabled for only a short period prior to birth and the usual six weeks after birth. During pregnancy, working women may have special concerns. Please do not hesitate to discuss these concerns with you care provider.