

Work & pregnancy: from month to month

You have a job and you are pregnant, or would like to become pregnant in the near future. What does this all involve with regard to your job? And what situations will you be faced with once you have become a mother? This brochure offers you a summary of what you may expect from month to month and also explains your rights and obligations. FNV Bondgenoten helps to look after your work-related interests, also when you are pregnant. We do this in various ways. Have a look on www.fnvbondgenoten.nl. If you have any questions after having read this folder, then consult the more detailed Dutch brochure *Alles over zwangerschap en werk* (Everything about work and pregnancy). For more information on this, refer to the back of this summarised folder.

Before you get pregnant

You should always be careful if you work with hazardous substances, but many people do not realise this. Some substances, such as carcinogenic and so-called reprotoxic substances, cause extra fertility risks in men as well as women, or they may harm the unborn child. There are many professions that may involve handling hazardous substances. For example, if you work in the cleaning sector or in a laboratory, but also if you are a painter, nurse, pharmacist's assistant or if you work with certain pesticides. Every employer should draw up a list of risks that employees may be exposed to in their job, also if it involves these hazardous substances. Ask your employer for this list and read about the risks. If you are not sure, you can always visit the *Arbodienst* (working conditions service) counselling hour or consult with the company doctor. Members can also ring FNV Bondgenoten's *Arbo-telefoon*: 030 273 8738 for questions relating to health and safety in the workplace.

The first month

You are only just pregnant. Most women often do not even know for certain whether they are pregnant, let alone that they take it into account when doing their job. Even at this early stage in pregnancy it is also important to be cautious when you work with hazardous substances. If you need to handle them, then it is advisable to notify your employer without delay that you are pregnant. In consultation with your employer you can determine whether you can be given other tasks, or discuss other ways to protect your unborn child. If you work with animals or laboratory animals you should be extra aware. And be alert to any risk of exposure to radiation. Read more about this subject in the detailed Dutch brochure *Alles over zwangerschap en werk* (see the back of this folder). Studies into the effects of computer exposure have not yet shown that this poses a risk for pregnant women and/or their unborn child.

The second month

If you are pregnant and involved in a job selection procedure, you are not obliged to report pregnancy. Neither is the employer allowed to ask.

Be careful with vibrations and shocks. They may give you back problems and are also bad for the child that you are carrying. You should avoid working under extremely hot or cold temperatures, for example in a cold-storage room. This will burden your body and your unborn child too much. We definitely advise against working in depressurised situations, for example diving. The difference in pressure may harm the unborn child.

The third month

Now there is less risk that something could go wrong with your pregnancy. For many women the 12th week of pregnancy is the right moment to inform their employer and colleagues. As soon as you have notified your employer, you are legally entitled to extra

protection during pregnancy in situations that require this. In addition, you should be given an opportunity to visit your midwife or gynaecologist, also during working hours. Ask the midwife for a pregnancy statement with the estimated date of birth. Your employer needs this statement to notify the *UWV*, the Institute for Employee Benefit Schemes, so that he will receive an allowance to cover your replacement and you can take maternity leave without loss of pay. Other things that you need to be extra careful with: do not lift heavy objects (less than 10 kg each time) and ensure that you are not exposed to sound levels that exceed 80 dB(A).

The fourth month

When you are pregnant, you are entitled to 16 weeks of maternity leave. (In Dutch this is called *zwangerschapsverlof* before giving birth and *bevallingsverlof* after the baby is born.) You can take up this leave from six to four weeks, respectively, before the estimated date of birth. Once the baby is born, you are still legally entitled to another ten to twelve weeks, respectively, of maternity leave (*bevallingsverlof*). Please note that multiple births do not extend your entitlement to leave. Refer to the booklet with the collective agreement on terms and conditions of employment (*CAO-boekje*) for the exact arrangements in your branch of business or company. If you intend to resume work after the baby has been born and want to make use of childcare facilities, you may want to have your baby registered now. There could be waiting lists, so the sooner you get registered the sooner you may get a place. Ask your employer and your partner's employer about the options for a financial contribution towards childcare.

Your pregnancy may cause health problems for which you need to visit a medical practitioner or a paramedic such as a physiotherapist or a physician (GP or specialist). Appointments usually take place during working hours. Check what arrangements have been made in the collective agreement. Members of FNV Bondgenoten can obtain a *CAO-boekje* free of charge by contacting telephone number 0900 9690 (€ 0.10 a minute).

The fifth month

It is never healthy to work long hours under stress or time pressure, also called work-related stress. When you are pregnant you should take extra care of yourself. In stressful situations your body produces all kinds of extra hormones that may affect you and your unborn child. Discuss these situations with your superior and consult whether your tasks can be arranged differently, or whether your working hours and breaks can be adapted, by inserting an extra break or working fewer shifts, for example. You are not obliged to work night shifts during pregnancy. You are entitled to extra breaks when you are pregnant and up to six months after giving birth. If you work eight hours a day, then you are allowed to take a maximum break of one-hour extra on full pay. The employer should give you the opportunity to take this break.

In the event of sickness, you can report sick in the usual way. You should notify your employer if your sickness is pregnancy-related, for example high blood pressure or pelvic instability. In this way, he can apply for an allowance to cover your replacement. You will be paid your salary in full. If you are on unemployment benefit (*WW-uitkering*) or occupational disablement benefit (*WAO-uitkering*) you should notify the *UWV*. From the twentieth pregnancy week onwards, women who frequently used to lift heavy weights during their job are only allowed to lift a maximum of five kilograms, ten times a day.

The sixth month

Discuss with your superior how replacement will be arranged while you are on maternity leave. It will be good for both you and your colleagues that adequate replacement is arranged, so that your colleagues do not need to work extra hard. This is also a good time to consider how you may want to combine working and looking after your child in the future. If you have a partner, discuss with your partner how you would like to handle the new situation. Are you both going to work part time? Structurally or temporarily? You have the right to work part time. Your employer will need to come with substantiated

arguments for rejecting your request. With regard to the work situation, you will need to take into account that you retain more fluid during pregnancy. As a result you may get RSI-related complaints such as pain, stiffness and a tingling feeling in your neck, shoulders, arms and/or fingers. Especially highly repetitive jobs such as cash register operator, goods packer, and assembly and VDU work may cause such complaints. Discuss with your superior the possibility of adapted work if you experience these complaints. Make sure that you do not constantly sit in the same position while performing your tasks. It is advisable to change your position every now and then and to have frequent breaks. Always contact the company doctor if you experience serious complaints.

The seventh month

From the thirtieth week onwards it is not advisable to lift weights of five kilograms or over, more than five times a day. Furthermore, during the final three months of pregnancy your employer can no longer oblige you to squat on the ground, to kneel or bend down or to operate pedals while standing up.

The eighth month

You need to notify your employer at least three weeks before your maternity leave starts. This will leave him little time to arrange your replacement, so try to inform your employer sooner if you already know when you want to stop work and start maternity leave. Consider once more the financial consequences of this (temporary) interruption of work. Pay will be continued, but some components, for example extra income from overtime, may not be paid. By considering the financial impact at an early stage, you will not be unpleasantly taken by surprise.

The ninth month

The last month before giving birth is dedicated to maternity leave. Your belly will be getting in the way a bit and you will need some well-deserved rest. Enjoy your maternity leave!

Birth

When the baby has been born you need to inform your employer who, in turn, can notify the *UWV*. On the basis of this notification the *UWV* will determine on what date your maternity leave should end. Your partner will be entitled to emergency leave (*calamiteitenverlof*) if the baby is born on a working day. On the days following childbirth your partner will be entitled to birth leave (*kraamverlof*). Check in the *CAO-boekje* what arrangements have been made in this respect.

The first month of parenthood

You will now need to get used to being a parent. Fortunately, you will still be on maternity leave so that you do not need to think about going back to work. Together with your partner you can start thinking about how you are going to handle the period after maternity leave. One option is to take parental leave (*ouderschapsverlof*), for which you will need to meet a number of criteria. The actual provision can be found in the detailed brochure. Depending on what you have in mind, you may both want to take a shorter or longer period of part-time leave to look after your child. Check the *CAO-boekje* for details.

The second month of parenthood

The second period of maternity leave (in Dutch this is called *bevallingsverlof*) starts on the first day after the baby is born and lasts at least ten consecutive weeks. If you continued working for a longer period before giving birth and have taken less than six weeks of maternity leave, you may add this time to the period of leave after the baby is born. This means that you still do not need to resume work this month.

The third month of parenthood

The end of maternity leave is approaching. Some women will resume work in the course of this month. It may happen that you cannot fully resume work immediately as a result of complications during pregnancy and/or giving birth. Discuss this as soon as possible with your superior, so that a suitable solution can be found and temporary replacement can be arranged. The possibilities can be determined in consultation with the company doctor.

The fourth month of parenthood

Depending on your physical condition you will have resumed work. If you are breastfeeding, you may need to express milk during working hours. Your employer is obliged to create a number of facilities such as a separate room, where you can sit without being disturbed, and a refrigerator to keep the milk in. You have the right to spend a maximum of 25% of your working time to express milk or feed your child. If you prefer, you can also go home to feed the child during working hours. When breastfeeding, try to ensure that you avoid handling hazardous substances as much as possible. Furthermore, you should not be exposed to radioactive radiation and lead compounds if you work in a laboratory, for example. Always contact the company doctor if you are in doubt as to what to do.

The fifth month of parenthood and onwards

By now you will be getting used to combining work and looking after your child. However, sometimes an unexpected situation may arise; for example, if the childcare centre rings that your child has become ill. You or your partner may need to collect your child from the nursery. This is considered an emergency situation and you are entitled to emergency leave (*calamiteitenverlof*). Should your child remain ill for longer, then you can make use of your entitlement to short-term care leave (*kortdurend zorgverlof*). If necessary, arrangements have also been made for long-term care leave (*langdurig zorgverlof*). Please, consult your *CAO-boekje* for the provisions.

More information?

In this folder we have given you a summary of general information about working before and after pregnancy. If you need more information, you can download FNV Bondgenoten's Dutch brochure *Alles over werk en zwangerschap* from www.fnvbondgenoten.nl. Members can also obtain this brochure free of charge by contacting telephone number 0900 9690 (€ 0.10 a minute). If you are not yet a member, you can join the union by ringing this number, too.

If you need more copies of this summary, you can order these by telephone.

FNV Bondgenoten is the largest trade union in the market sector. It has over 466,000 members in the industrial sector, the iron and steel industry/light engineering industry, in the trade, transport, services, and agricultural sectors, and the general and technical support services sector. FNV Bondgenoten has concluded about 700 collective agreements in these sectors.