

# Risk assessment for returning to work alongside breastfeeding

If you intend to return to work alongside breastfeeding, you must complete a risk assessment.

This risk assessment should be completed with your educational or clinical supervisor before your return, and then reviewed as necessary, e.g. every month.

Please use this document to guide your risk assessment discussion. The risks outlined are not exhaustive: please consider your own personal circumstances and work environment. If you will be working with ionising radiation, review the [Health and Safety Executive document, Working safely with ionising radiation: Guidelines for expectant or breastfeeding mothers](#), as part of your risk assessment. (Health and Safety Executive, 2015)

## Risk: sleep disruption in new parents is associated with near miss road traffic collisions (Malish, 2016)

### Question 1. Do you feel safe to drive to, during, and from daytime shifts (0900 – 1700)?

Consider:

- how often do you feel sleepy when driving?
- would you score  $\geq 9$  on the [Epworth Sleepiness Scale](#)?
- if you are expected to travel between sites, what is the frequency and distance of travel?

Yes, I feel safe to drive to, during, and from daytime shifts → *Go to the next question*

Not applicable, as I do not drive to, during, or from daytime shifts → *Go to the next question*

No, I do not feel safe to drive to, during, or from daytime shifts → *Go to risk mitigation (below)*

#### Risk mitigation

**Consider the following strategies: are they possible, and would they reduce the risk of a road traffic collision?**

- can time spent driving be reduced, e.g. could some work be done remotely or at a closer site, or could any travel between sites be reduced or eliminated?
- can driving in peak traffic times / 'rush hour' be avoided, e.g. could session start and / or finish times be adjusted?
- can alternative means of travel be used, and, if necessary, could start and / or finish times be adjusted to accommodate this change?
- can protected breaks to rest at work be granted, i.e. no interruptions or 'bleeps'? (**BMA, 2024**)

#### Can the risk be mitigated?

**Yes** → i) document and enact risk mitigation plan, ii) go to the next question

**No** → see **Box 1. If the risk cannot be mitigated**

**Risk: sleep disruption in new parents is associated with near miss road traffic collisions (Malish, 2016)**

**Question 1. Do you feel safe to drive to, during, or from shifts outside of daytime hours (1700 – 0900)?**

Consider:

- how often do you feel sleepy when driving?
- would you score  $\geq 9$  on the [Epworth Sleepiness Scale](#)?
- if you are expected to travel between sites, what is the frequency and distance of travel in a typical shift?

Yes, I feel safe to drive to, during, or from shifts outside of daytime hours → *Go to the next question*

Not applicable, as I do not drive to, during, or from shifts outside of daytime hours → *Go to the next question*

No, I do not feel safe to drive to, during, or from shifts outside of daytime hours → *Go to risk mitigation (below)*

**Risk mitigation**

**Consider the following strategies: are they possible, and would they reduce the risk of a road traffic collision?**

- can time spent driving be reduced, e.g. could some work be done at home or at a closer site, or could any travel between sites be reduced or eliminated?
- can alternative means of travel be used, and, if necessary, could start and / or finish times be adjusted to accommodate this change?
- can protected breaks to rest at work be granted, i.e. no interruptions or ‘bleeps’? **(BMA, 2024)**
- can shift lengths be adjusted temporarily? *The BMA recommends shifts are  $\leq 10$  hours in length, for as long as you are breastfeeding overnight, as a minimum until your child is one year old. (BMA, 2024)*
- can the requirement to work night shifts be suspended temporarily? *The BMA recommends an exemption from night shifts, for as long as you are breastfeeding overnight, as a minimum until your child is one year old. (BMA, 2024)*

**Can the risk be mitigated?**

**Yes** → i) document and enact risk mitigation plan, ii) go to the next question

**No** → see **Box 1. If the risk cannot be mitigated**

**Risk: disruption to breastfeeding or expressing of breastmilk is associated with breast duct engorgement and mastitis (NHS, 2022)**

**Question 3. Do you intend to express breastmilk and / or breastfeed at work in daytime hours (0900 – 1700)?**

Consider:

- how often do you need to express breastmilk and / or breastfeed to avoid engorgement of the breast ducts?

No, I do not intend to express breastmilk and / or breastfeed at work in daytime hours → *Go to the next question*

Yes, I do intend to express breastmilk and / or breastfeed at work in daytime hours → *Consider the following:*

- is a space readily accessible in daytime working hours to express breastmilk and / or breastfeed (the minimum requirement is a private, hygienic, comfortable room, with the option to lie down)?
- how long will you need to get to, and from, and use, a breastfeeding or breastmilk expressing friendly space?
- if you are expressing breastmilk, is a fridge (temperature  $\leq 4^{\circ}\text{C}$ ) available in daytime hours, and how long will you need to travel to and from its location? (**Breastfeeding Network, 2019**)
- if your child is being brought to you at work, where will you meet the person bringing them, and how much time do you need to get there and back?
- If you are travelling to your child, how much time do you need to travel, feed your child, and return?

#### **Risk mitigation**

***Consider the following strategies: are they possible, and would they reduce your risk of breast duct engorgement and mastitis?***

- can protected breaks of sufficient length and frequency to express and / or breastfeed be granted, i.e. no interruptions or ‘bleeps’? (**BMA, 2024**)
- can shift lengths be adjusted temporarily? *The BMA recommends shifts are  $\leq 10$  hours in length, for as long as you are breastfeeding overnight, as a minimum until your child is one year old.* (**BMA, 2024**)
- can you work from home, or remotely, as part of your role?

#### **Can the risk be mitigated?**

**Yes** → i) document and enact risk mitigation plan, ii) go to next question

**No** → see **Box 1. If the risk cannot be mitigated**

**Risk: disruption to breastfeeding or expressing of breastmilk is associated with breast duct engorgement and mastitis (NHS, 2022)**

**Question 4. Do you intend to express breastmilk and / or breastfeed at work outside of daytime hours (1700 – 0900)?**

Consider:

- how often do you need to express breastmilk and / or breastfeed to avoid engorgement of the breast ducts?

No, I do not intend to express breastmilk and / or breastfeed at work outside of daytime hours (1700 - 0900)  
→ *No further questions*

Yes, I do intend to express breastmilk and / or breastfeed at work outside of daytime hours (1700 - 0900) →  
*Consider the following:*

- is a space readily accessible outside of daytime working hours to express breastmilk and / or breastfeed (the minimum requirement is a private, hygienic, comfortable room, with the option to lie down)?
- how long will you need to get to, and from, and use, a breastfeeding or breastmilk expressing friendly space?
- if you are expressing breastmilk, is a fridge (temperature  $\leq 4^{\circ}\text{C}$ ) available outside of daytime hours, and how long will you need to travel to and from its location? (**Breastfeeding Network, 2019**)
- if your child is being brought to you at work, where will you meet the person bringing them, and how much time do you need to get there and back?

- If you are travelling to your child, how much time do you need to travel, feed your child, and return?

### Risk mitigation

**Consider the following strategies: are they possible, and would they reduce your risk of breast duct engorgement and mastitis?**

- can protected breaks of sufficient length and frequency to express and / or breastfeed be granted, i.e. no interruptions or ‘bleeps’? **(BMA, 2024)**
- can shift lengths be adjusted temporarily? *The BMA recommends shifts are ≤ 10 hours in length, for as long as you are breastfeeding overnight, as a minimum until your child is one year old.* **(BMA, 2024)**
- can the requirement to work night shifts be suspended temporarily? *The BMA recommends exemption from night shifts, for as long as you are breastfeeding overnight, as a minimum until your child is one year old.* **(BMA, 2024)**
- can you work from home, or remotely, as part of your role?

### Can the risk be mitigated?

**Yes** → i) document and enact risk mitigation plan

**No** → see **Box 1. If the risk cannot be mitigated**

### Box 1. If the risk cannot be mitigated (Health and Safety Executive, 2022)

#### **If the risk cannot be mitigated, then:**

- your employer must offer you suitable, appropriate, alternative work, on the same terms and conditions, including pay.

#### **If that is not possible, then:**

- your employer must suspend you on full pay for as long as necessary.

## References

- BMA. (2024). *Guidance for doctors on pregnancy and breastfeeding/breastfeeding*. Retrieved from [www.bma.org.uk](http://www.bma.org.uk): [www.bma.org.uk: www.bma.org.uk/pay-and-contracts/maternity-paternity-and-adoption/your-rights/guidance-for-doctors-on-pregnancy-and-breastfeeding/breastfeeding](http://www.bma.org.uk/pay-and-contracts/maternity-paternity-and-adoption/your-rights/guidance-for-doctors-on-pregnancy-and-breastfeeding/breastfeeding)
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