

## Pregnancy and working

This fact sheet provides you with information on working while pregnant and after giving birth.

### Are you pregnant?

Before you start to panic, determine if you are pregnant. Symptoms may include:

- a missed period
- sore breasts
- nausea & vomiting
- passing urine frequently
- tiredness
- lower back pain

You should have a pregnancy test if your period is more than a week late. There are two types of tests: urine and blood some doctors and sexual health services may provide testing for both urine and blood tests but a urine test is most common. Home pregnancy tests which are urine kits can be obtained from a chemist but results should be checked by a health professional.

### What if I am pregnant?

If you are pregnant, don't ignore the fact and take time to think over your options. There is no need to rush into anything. Instead, examine your choices carefully. Options include:

- continuing with the pregnancy
- continuing with the pregnancy and choosing adoption or fostering
- terminating the pregnancy

Talk to someone you feel comfortable with (eg. partner, friend, family, professional counsellor) who will support you in whatever decision you make. There are also special agencies such as 'Children by Choice' who can assist in your decision. While there is no perfect solution to an unintended pregnancy, your decision should be based on what is best for you at this time in your life.

### Working when pregnant

If you choose to continue working when you are pregnant, the following information may be useful.

- You may feel more vulnerable and emotional during your pregnancy so be careful with your security and don't take chances.
- If you are experiencing morning sickness change your shifts or work hours.
- Try to reduce your shifts and try not to see any clients who tend to be rough.
- Sexual intercourse is relatively safe in a 'low-risk' pregnancy and can occur up until delivery (unless your doctor advises differently).
- If bleeding occurs during pregnancy see your health care provider straight away.
- Ensure your clients understand you are pregnant and are gentle.
- After four months it is best not to lie on your back for very long as this may make you feel light headed. Also pressure on your breasts is not ideal so try to use other positions for sex.
- Always use condoms and dental dams to ensure safe sex.
- Do not allow clients to blow into or near your vagina as this may cause an air embolism, which could be fatal.
- Kissing can leave you open to flu and colds.

### Sexually Transmitted Infections

Getting an STI when you are pregnant can affect both the pregnancy and the baby. If you experience recurring herpes and warts, see your doctor or sexual health clinic.

Continue to have your sexual health checks, even after you stop working as being tested is safe and swabs will not harm the pregnancy.

If you are diagnosed with chlamydia, gonorrhoea or syphilis in pregnancy these can be safely treated. Treatment will reduce the risk that these infections cause will cause any harm to you or your baby.

# Fact sheet for sex workers

## Hepatitis C

There is a small chance that Hepatitis C virus will be passed on to a baby during the pregnancy or at birth (about 6%). The risk is increased if the mother has only just become infected (or re-infected) or if she has serious liver damage. It is thought Hepatitis C is transmitted to the baby through contact with the mother's blood at the time of birth.

Hepatitis C does not seem to be passed on via breast milk.

## Other tips

A client's body odour and breath may cause morning sickness, as can certain lubes and condoms.

As your pregnancy progresses, you will need to buy clothes and underwear that will give you adequate support.

## Sex and work after pregnancy.

### When can I go back to work?

- You can usually go back to work six weeks after giving birth, depending on whether you have had a caesarean or vaginal birth or an episiotomy ( an episiotomy is when a doctor or midwife cut the skin between the vagina and the anus to prevent tearing during vaginal delivery). However, it is strongly recommended you speak to a worker friendly doctor or clinician to advise you.
- Remember a caesarean scar will be tender and sex in the missionary position may be uncomfortable.

### What problems could I encounter?

- Tiredness and depression: Feeding and late nights may make you too tired to work. Some women also suffer from postnatal depression. Don't go back to work until you are ready and seek professional help if you believe you are depressed.
- Pain: Episiotomy and bruising in and around the vagina will cause pain for a number of weeks. If intercourse is painful six weeks after delivery, then see your doctor. Instead of offering penetrative sex, suggest oral, Spanish or massage to your clients.

- Breastfeeding causes dryness of the vagina, so use lots of water-based lube. Don't have vaginal sex if it is too painful. Your breasts may feel tender and heavy, and milk will be released when your breasts are stimulated. Some clients find breast milk arousing and there is no risk to them if they drink it. Your body will create as much milk as is demanded.
- Relationships: If you have a partner, make time to be alone and have some privacy. You will both need time to adjust after childbirth and supporting each other through this period is important. You may decide that working is not an option.

## Contraception

As soon as you start having sex again (business or pleasure), use a reliable method of contraception. Options include:

- The Pill (combined): Can't be taken if you are breastfeeding.
- The Mini Pill (Progesterone only): Can be started three to four weeks after childbirth and it doesn't interfere with milk supply.
- Depo Provera: Can be started five days after delivery if bottle feeding and six weeks after delivery if breastfeeding.
- Diaphragm: Can be fitted six weeks after birth. You will need to be refitted if you used a diaphragm before pregnancy.
- Condoms: Use with lots of water-based lube.
- If you are fully breast feeding and your periods have not returned you may not need other contraception until six months after the baby's birth.