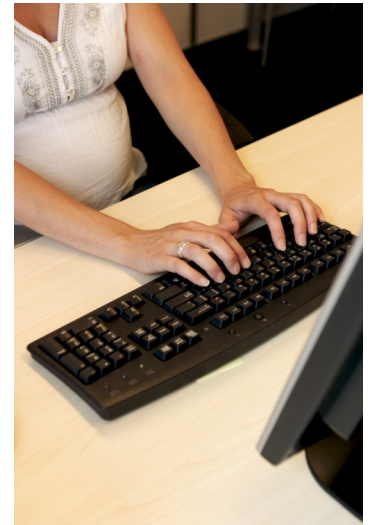


Pregnancy and the Office Worker

What can be done to reduce risk of injury during pregnancy?

- Move all frequently used items like the keyboard, mouse and telephone towards the front of the desk edge to minimize the reaching especially in late stage pregnancy.
- Avoid awkward postures of the back, knees, and shoulders by
 - ⇒ Standing to access overhead bins to prevent an over shoulder reach.
 - ⇒ Preventing the knees from moving beyond the ankles when bending to access lower shelves.
 - ⇒ Avoiding lifting or lowering to/from the floor.
 - ⇒ Using good body mechanics when lifting.
- Use a supportive chair with the lumbar support placed in the lumbar curve. Keep in mind that the lumbar curve will likely change as the woman's body changes; therefore, the lumbar support should be adjusted in height and depth as the pregnancy progresses.
- Avoid using step-stools and remove trip hazards to reduce the risk of falling.
- Minimize repetitive activity by taking frequent micro-breaks every 30 minutes to stand and stretch or to take a brief walk.
- Consider elevating the legs for a 10 to 15 minutes on each hour and taking a short walk once an hour to minimize leg and foot swelling.



How does a woman's body change during pregnancy?

- Increasing Abdominal Girth
- Softening of Ligaments
- Retention of Fluid
- Shifting of the Center of Gravity

Ergonomically, what does this mean?

Overall it means an increased risk for injury due to:

- increased reaching and awkward postures,
- instability and strain on mobile joints
- nerve impingement syndromes like carpal tunnel are more likely,
- increased risk for fall.

Pregnancy and the Office Worker

What is a safe amount for pregnant woman to lift?

Lifting ability is diminished due to reduced spinal stability and increased abdominal girth.

The following guidelines assume that the load is handled infrequently (one lift every 5 minutes), that the load has good hand-holds, is well balanced and can be lifted with minimal twisting of the spine.

- The safe lifting limit in the early stages of an uncomplicated pregnancy from knee to waist is 32 pounds according to a recent article by Waters et al. This is much reduced from earlier recommendations of 51 lbs by the AMA, which had not been updated for 26 years.
- After 20 weeks gestation maximum recommended lifting amounts are reduced to 23 lbs when lifting from knee to waist and further to no more than 18 lbs in late pregnancy. This is due to increased abdominal girth placing the object further from the woman as she lifts.
- It is also important to remember that no lifting below mid shin and above the shoulders is recommended during pregnancy and good body mechanics are important.

Safe Body Mechanics When Lifting:

Consider the following tips and always ask for help when the load is too heavy, large, or bulky.

Assess the situation, test the weight of the load, consider how bulky the load is and where it is located—do you need help? Be prepared—wear non-slip footwear (avoid flip flops) and remove items that might lead to a trip and fall

Complete the lift:

- stand with a wide base,
- bend the hips and knees while keeping the spine upright and not allowing the knees to extend beyond the ankles
- face the object directly to avoid twisting,
- keep the object close to the body,
- tighten the stomach muscles while lifting, and
- lift slowly with control
- don't hold your breath

Keep loads small. For example, remove reams of paper from the box rather than lifting the entire box of copy paper.

When moving loads consider using a cart to minimize the amount of carrying.



References:

Waters TR, MacDonald LA, Hudock SD, Goddard DE. *Provisional Recommended Weight Limits for Manual Lifting During Pregnancy*. Human Factors: 56 (1): 2014: 203-214