

Swim England Safety Guidance

Swimming Teaching Whilst Pregnant

Is it safe to teach swimming whilst pregnant?

Swimming Teaching whilst pregnant

Many female swimming teachers ask the question “Is it safe for me to teach swimming on the poolside or in the water whilst pregnant?” This is a frequently asked question because swimming teachers are acutely aware that hot and humid atmospheric conditions in the swimming pool hall take an even greater toll when pregnant and that the pool has a chlorine-laden atmosphere. In fact anyone who has not worked on the poolside for long periods will not fully understand the risk of working in such an environment whilst pregnant, which makes this situation ideally suited for the health and safety requirement to consult.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require that the employer carry out an individual risk assessment for every pregnant worker.

No two pregnancies are the same and therefore, new and expectant mothers should always seek medical advice regarding their work activity; and it cannot be sufficiently emphasised that the employer is not the worker’s doctor and cannot take on that role. Any medical advice must come from the pregnant worker’s doctor and if the pregnant worker receives any medical advice with regards to work she must pass that information on to her employer to act upon. The employer’s risk assessment should generally be confined to aspects of the worker’s activities that may be harder to achieve whilst pregnant, or aspects of the work that may endanger the worker or child. The type of issues that should be reconsidered are:

- Abdominal impact
- Manual handling and practicality of equipment used
- Increased possibility of slips and trips on a slippery surface
- Posture
- Pressurised atmospheres
- Vigorous exercise
- Dehydration and fluid intake
- Chemicals
- Noise
- Vibration
- Hours of work
- Frequency of rest breaks and suitable quiet rest areas

A heavily pregnant swimming teacher may find teaching in the water as something of a relief as the water supports the weight of the abdomen and short periods in the water are believed to be beneficial to expectant mothers; however long periods in the water (over ½ hour) are not advised.

If in doubt either the swimming teacher or the employer should consult a medical practitioner.

Swim England has provided a template risk assessment for new and expectant mother available on request.

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Readers are advised that the guidance or advice given in this information sheet is not inclusive and any decisions on swimming pool design should first be discussed with a member of the Swim England's Facilities Team. Contact details: facilities@swimming.org or telephone: 01509 618700.

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