

IF YOU ARE PREGNANT and working in a research laboratory

You may be vulnerable to serious risks in the first three months of your pregnancy. That is why it is **best to say you are pregnant as early as possible !**

Your work environment may present dangers that you should be aware of

Certain chemical or biological agents or ionizing radiation present in a laboratory can entail dangers for your pregnancy or breast feeding if they penetrate your body. Penetration happens more often than not by way of the respiratory system or by absorption through the skin, but your digestive system or your eyes can also present risks.

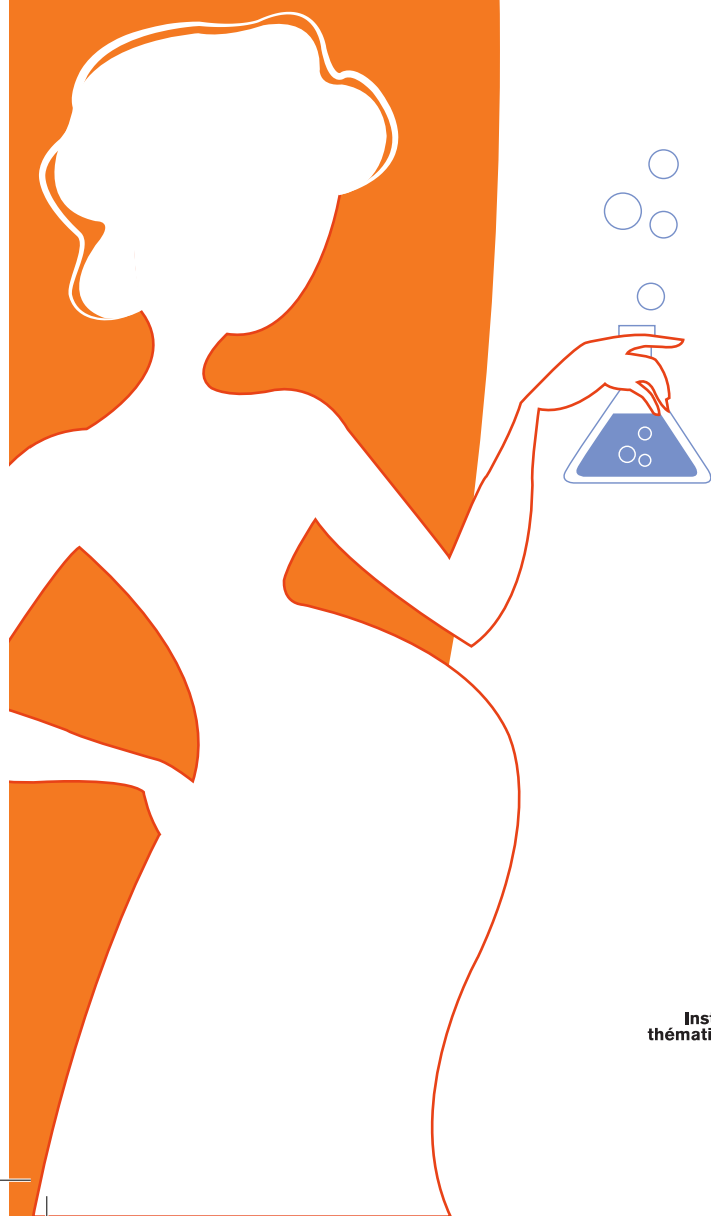
If dangers have been identified, you must know how to protect yourself

Some workplace situations are forbidden by regulations. However, most often, absence of risk of penetration by products, organisms and radiation that can be harmful to pregnancy can be guaranteed by work reorganization, the respect of good laboratory practice, the adoption of collective protection equipment such as bio-safety cabinets and fume hoods maintained in perfect working order and the use of individual protection equipment and clothing. Full risk evaluation is therefore absolutely essential to your experiencing pregnancy at work in complete tranquility.

Talk about your situation to the Director of your Unit and ask for a consultation regarding risk prevention with your workplace doctor

The Unit Director is responsible for the prevention of workplace risks for women who are pregnant or breast-feeding. He or she is advised in the execution of these responsibilities by the prevention assistant and the person competent in radiation protection for his Unit, as well as by the risk prevention advisor and the doctor with responsibility for prevention.

The latter ensures special medical monitoring for pregnant women. The scope and content of this monitoring is decided in accordance with the risks associated with your function and the difficulties you may experience in the exercise of your duties during your pregnancy. The doctor is authorized to recommend temporary changes in your job or in the conditions in which you carry it out. On your return to work after maternity leave, you are advised to see the workplace doctor once again, particularly if you propose continuing breast-feeding when you resume work.



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The need to carry heavy loads or stand up for long periods of time and exposure to electromagnetic radiation are all workplace factors that need to be taken into account. Other dangers not specified here may be present in a research laboratory...



... warned in time, your workplace doctor will be able to advise you and propose changes to ensure that your pregnancy goes well for both you and your baby.

Some information about the regulations which apply

CHEMICAL RISKS

○ **The regulations** forbid the assignment of a woman, who is pregnant or breast-feeding, to any work situation which might expose her to chemicals classified as toxic for reproduction in **categories 1A or 1B** (categories 1 and 2 in the previous classification system)¹. The relevant Safety Data Sheet and the product labelling provide information. The product label carries the following indications:



Danger - H360 - Can be harmful to fertility or to the unborn child

○ **There is no ban** on chemical agents classified as toxic for reproduction under Category 2 (Category 3 of the previous classification), but a risk evaluation is obligatory. The product label carries the following information:



Warning - H361 - May be harmful to fertility or to the unborn child

○ **If there is a breast-feeding risk: H362 - May be harmful to breast-fed babies**

NB: the labelling regulations do not apply to medications, radioactive substances or waste materials.

Absence of labelling does not necessarily mean that a product is safe. It may simply not have been evaluated yet. Care should also be exercised in respect of products classified as carcinogenic or teratogenic. They are also considered as constituting a risk for the unborn child.

RADIOACTIVITY RISKS

○ **It is forbidden by** regulations to assign a pregnant woman to work that requires a **Category A classification**. Similarly, a woman who is breast-feeding may not be assigned to work carrying a risk of internal exposure to ionizing radiation.

○ **No ban** applies to agents classified as **Category B**, but an evaluation of risk is obligatory since no unborn child, whatever the situation, can be exposed to more than 1 mSv throughout the entire period of pregnancy.

BIOLOGICAL RISKS

○ **The regulations** forbid exposure of a pregnant woman, who has not been immunized, to the measles virus or to Toxoplasma.

○ **There is no ban**, but a risk assessment is obligatory, in respect of any biological agent whatsoever that is likely to compromise the progress of the pregnancy. The list of such agents includes the Cytomegalovirus, the smallpox viruses and the Hepatitis B virus and HIV viruses.

¹As well as certain other dangerous chemical products: benzene, nitrate and chloronitrate benzene hydrocarbon derivatives, di-nitro phenol, aniline, benzidine, naphthylamines and their homologs...



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