

Heat, Hazards, & Healthy Pregnancies

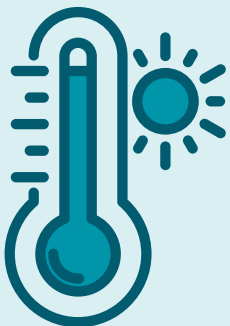
YOU HAVE RIGHTS AT WORK DURING PREGNANCY.

Heat and other hazards

Workers across the country are facing rising heat and unsafe conditions on the job. During pregnancy, these risks can be even more dangerous – but you have rights that can help keep you safe.

Workplace conditions that can be dangerous for pregnant workers include:

- Extreme heat (like working outdoors, or in hot warehouses or kitchens)
- Heavy lifting
- Chemical or pesticide exposure
- Standing for a long time without breaks
- Not being able to get water to drink
- Having to work fast without rest breaks



Why is heat especially dangerous during pregnancy?

Pregnant workers overheat and dehydrate faster than others. Extreme heat can make it more likely that the baby will be born too early or with other serious health problems.

Your rights at work

There is a national law called the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (PWFA). It applies to most employers that have 15 or more employees.

Under the PWFA, your employer must make changes at work to protect your health during pregnancy. These changes are called “reasonable accommodations.”

You have the right to:

- Get changes at work to stay safe and healthy
- Keep working instead of being forced to take time off
- Not be punished for speaking up or asking for changes
- A safe workplace, including protection from heat and other hazards

You do not need to have a serious medical condition to be protected.

You have these rights regardless of your immigration status.

Your rights may be stronger depending on where you live. **Check your state:**

PregnantAtWork.org/pregnancy-state-laws



What changes can I ask for?

To stay cool and safe:

- Shade structures or cool areas to rest
- Cool water and cups
- More rest breaks
- Permission to slow your pace
- Schedule changes to avoid peak heat
- Lighter or different job duties

For comfort and health:

- Permission to sit down while working
- More breaks for using the bathroom
- Help with heavy lifting
- Permission to eat or drink during your shift
- Remote work (if your job allows)
- Not being around unsafe chemicals
- Being excused from job duties that are risky during pregnancy

Time off work:

- Days off to avoid extreme heat, or for morning sickness
- Unpaid leave to avoid risky working conditions or for bed rest
- Time off for medical appointments
- Reduced or part-time hours

Some states also offer paid leave. Call our free helpline to learn what's available.



How do I ask for a change at work?



What words should I use?

Tell your boss that you need a **“reasonable accommodation”** for pregnancy.

- It’s best to make your request in writing
- Mention the law: Pregnant Workers Fairness Act
- Your employer must respond and work with you to find a solution

Tips for talking to your employer: bit.ly/4srVF99

If your boss hasn’t heard about the law, give them this: bit.ly/3Ottl8j

Do I need to give my employer a doctor’s note?

Your employer is *not* allowed to ask for medical paperwork if you need extra water, food, or restroom breaks - or if you have some other need that is obvious.

For other requests, your employer is usually allowed to ask you for a medical note or form that includes:

- Confirmation that you need a change at work because of pregnancy
- What you need
- What job change would help
- How long you will need the change

Your employer is not allowed to ask for any more information than this. They also shouldn’t argue about whether you actually need the changes your healthcare provider says you need.

Doctors, nurse practitioners, midwives, doulas, and telehealth providers can all write this work note.

Give your healthcare provider this: bit.ly/4cydU7W

YOU ARE PROTECTED FROM RETALIATION



It is illegal for your employer to punish you for being pregnant or for asking for changes at work. This includes: cutting your hours, reducing your pay, assigning harder work, and harassing or firing you.

All workers have these rights - no matter your immigration status.

You are not alone.

Workers across the country are speaking up and organizing for safer conditions on the job. You can take action and get support.



LEARN MORE AND GET SUPPORT

Worker safety and heat justice resources:

- [Know your rights at work](#)
- [Tools to stay safe in extreme heat](#)
- [Connect with a local COSH group](#)

Pregnancy laws & paid leave by state:

PregnantAtWork.org/pregnancy-state-laws

National COSH Fired Up!

Workers for Heat Justice:

NationalCOSH.org/fired-up

FREE & CONFIDENTIAL LEGAL HELPLINE

WorkLife Law

415-703-8276

helpline@worklifelaw.org

WorkLifeLaw.org/get-help

Free and private. Available no matter your income or immigration status. English, Spanish, and other languages available.

