

STUDENT PREGNANCY FAQs

1. Am I required to notify the college if I am pregnant or planning to become pregnant?

Students are not legally required to disclose their pregnancy or any medical condition to the college. However, our intent is to help you and your baby avoid common risks associated with the veterinary profession while you are a student in the college. Pregnant students are encouraged to inform the Associate Dean for Academic Programs and Student Affairs of their pregnancy, or intention to become pregnant, as early as possible to discuss available resources and options as they continue in the DVM program.

2. Can I take a leave of absence during my pregnancy and/or to care for my newborn child?

Kansas State University treats pregnancy, childbirth, false pregnancy, and termination of pregnancy as a justification for an academic leave of absence for so long a period as is deemed medically necessary by the student's physician. Students must work with the Associate Dean for Academic Programs and Student Affairs to request a leave of absence. At the conclusion of that student's leave, the student will be reinstated to the status she held when that leave began. It is the student's decision whether to take any or all of the leave as recommended by their physician.

3. Am I eligible for accommodations during my pregnancy?

While pregnancy is not generally considered a disability, students are encouraged to contact the Student Access Center if they believe academic accommodations may be necessary during their pregnancy. Pregnant students are expected to meet all curricular standards and requirements of the DVM program.

4. What risks or hazards should I be worried about as a veterinary student?

There are many causes for miscarriages, birth defects, and other reproductive problems. In most cases of an adverse pregnancy outcome, the cause remains unknown. Veterinary medicine has many inherent dangers for a pregnant student and their developing fetus. Ionizing radiation, zoonotic diseases, anesthetic gases, chemotherapeutic agents, exogenous hormones, and physical injuries are just some of the risks pregnant students in the veterinary profession may face. Students who are pregnant or plan to become pregnant during clinical rotations should work with the Clinical Sciences department to consider rotation scheduling that may minimize common risks.

- *Ionizing radiation* (<https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/repro/ionizingradiation.html>)
 - Exposure to ionizing radiation while pregnant may increase risks of birth defects or miscarriage. Risks vary based on dosage of radiation and stage of pregnancy during exposure.
 - In accordance with the Kansas State University Radiation Safety Manual, students in a condition of the first signs of pregnancy should limit their occupational exposure to the abdomen area to less than 0.5 rem over the entire pregnancy period. https://www.k-state.edu/safety/docs/radiation_safety_manual.pdf

- *Zoonotic infectious agents*
 (<https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/repro/infectious.html>;
<http://www.nasphv.org/Documents/VeterinaryStandardPrecautions.pdf>)
 - Veterinarians may encounter zoonotic bacteria, fungi, parasites, and viruses in professional settings. Some of these infectious agents may present specific risks to pregnant students and/or the developing fetus. Organisms of concern to pregnant students include, but are not limited to, *Toxoplasma*, *Brucella*, *Salmonella*, *Cryptosporidia*, *Listeria*, *Chlamydomphila psittaci*, *Coxiella burnetii*, and Lymphocytic Choriomeningitis Virus. Pregnant students should immediately contact their supervising faculty and take appropriate precautions if they believe they have been in contact with a suspect or confirmed case of these infections.
- *Chemicals*
 - Anesthetic gases (<https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/repro/anestheticgases.html>)
 - Pregnant students exposed to waste anesthetic gases may have an increased risk of miscarriage.
 - Decisions regarding pregnant student exposure to anesthetic gases, including normal waste gases during anesthetic procedures or patients recovering from anesthesia, should be made in conjunction with the student's physician.
 - Students may wear a respirator during periods of potential exposure to waste anesthetic gases as directed by their physician. Students are encouraged to contact Kansas State University Environmental Health and Safety for questions regarding respirator use and proper fitting.
 - Formaldehyde (<https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/repro/formaldehyde.html>)
 - Working with formaldehyde (and closely related formalin and glutaraldehyde) while pregnant may increase chances of miscarriage.
 - A student may wear a respirator during periods of potential exposure to formaldehyde as directed by their physician. Students are encouraged to contact Kansas State University Environmental Health and Safety for questions regarding respirator use and proper fitting.
 - Chemotherapeutic agents
 (<https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/repro/antineoplastic.html>)
 - Working with certain chemotherapeutic agents during pregnancy could increase chances of fetal loss or miscarriage, fetal defects, pre-term births, or learning disabilities in children exposed during pregnancy. All students, including pregnant students, should follow all VHC policies for protective clothing and equipment.
 - Exogenous hormones (ex. prostaglandins, oxytocin)
 - Veterinarians routinely work with exogenous hormones that affect reproductive organs of animals and people. Exposure to these types of compounds may increase risks for fetal loss and miscarriage. Students should talk with their supervising faculty in cases where these compounds are administered to patients. When working with these compounds, students should wear protective clothing (like gloves and protective clothing) to avoid contact.
- *Physical injury*

- Physical dangers associated with large animals, aggressive animals, and heavy objects may be exacerbated during pregnancy. Students should be cognizant of physical dangers and consult with their supervising faculty or staff with specific concerns. Any injuries should be immediately reported to supervising faculty or staff.

5. Where can I find more information about pregnancy and the veterinary profession?

- [The Pregnancy Discrimination Act](#)
- [The Family and Medical Leave Act \(FMLA\)](#)
- [The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act \(HIPAA\)](#)
- [The Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#)
- [Compendium of Veterinary Standard Precautions: Zoonotic Disease Prevention in Veterinary Personnel](#)
- [CDC NIOSH Reproductive Health and the Workplace](#)