

The work of specific groups of people

Template:Checked*Especially vulnerable employees* (elderly workers, juveniles, women including pregnant and lactating women) '*require special attention from occupational health and safety experts*'. For this reason, the particularities of the given groups should be duly taken into account in the education of these professionals. Jobs and workplaces that are prohibited for pregnant women, nursing women, mothers until the end of the ninth month after giving birth, and minors, and the conditions under which minors may exceptionally perform these jobs due to preparation for a profession, are listed in Decree No. 288 **from 2003**^[1].

Women including pregnant and lactating

There are genetic and hormonal differences between men and women. A woman has less muscle mass, and thus lower muscular performance on average. Given that most workplaces today require only light muscle load, women's lower physical performance does not constitute a disadvantage for women in paid work. However, women should generally not perform jobs with a higher proportion of heavy physical work. Limit values for lifting and carrying loads must also be observed: 15 kg should not be exceeded for occasional lifting and carrying and 10 kg in more frequent cases.

In addition to protection against dismissal, special protective provisions, restrictions and prohibitions of employment apply to pregnant women and nursing mothers. Pregnant women and nursing mothers may not be employed in work with

- chemical pollutants
- biological pollutants
- physical harmful factors

In addition, there is a prohibition for pregnant and lactating women:

- work in underground mining,
- all physically heavy work,
- work in a chord, as well as work on a treadmill with a prescribed work pace,
- overtime work
- night (between 8:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m.) and Sunday work (with some exceptions), (after completion of the 5th month of pregnancy) permanently standing work if the job exceeds 4 hours a day,
- jobs that require frequent stretching or bending or permanent squatting or a permanently bent position, operating devices and machines of all kinds with a high load on the feet, especially with foot drive,
- work in which, as a result of pregnancy, a woman is exposed to an increased risk of contracting occupational diseases or in which, due to the risk of developing an occupational disease, there is an increased threat to the future mother or danger to the fetus, or embryo,
- working on means of transport (after completion of the 3rd month of pregnancy),
- work with an increased risk of injury, especially falling or collapsing.

In accordance with the Ordinance on Harmful Substances, in addition, when dealing with teratogenic, mutagenic or carcinogenic harmful substances, the relevant workers must be regularly instructed about the restrictions in employment and possible dangers for pregnant and lactating women.

Youth

In addition to special medical examinations and examinations as part of the protection of youth work, the Act on the Protection of Youth prescribes special restrictions up to and including the prohibition of employment of minors. There is a general ban on employment for children, with a few exceptions. A child in the sense of the law is someone who has not yet completed 15 years of age or is required to attend school. Juveniles are all those who have already turned 15 but not yet 18 years old. The most important restrictions and prohibitions on the employment of minors under the law are:

- working hours: no more than 8 hours a day, possibly no more than 40 hours per week;
- observance of breaks; no more than 4 ½ hours without a break, its duration at least 15 minutes;
- a guarantee of uninterrupted free time of at least 12 hours;
- prohibition of night work and work on Sundays and holidays;
- prohibition of working in chords.

No jobs:

- that exceed their physical and mental performance;
- during which they are exposed to moral hazard;
- which are associated with a special risk of injury;
- whose health is endangered by unusual heat or cold or high humidity;
- in which they are exposed to the harmful effects of noise, shocks or rays, harmful substances in the sense of the Chemicals Act or biological agents.

In principle, young people may only be employed if they have undergone a medical examination by a doctor of their choice within the last 14 months in accordance with the Ordinance on Examinations for the Protection of the Work of Young People. However, this inspection is not about determining the suitability for certain professions and activities, but rather about a general assessment, if the health and development of the minor is not endangered by the performance of certain jobs or employment.

In order to prevent health-related interruptions of professional education, as well as later retirement from the profession, it is absolutely necessary to pay attention to the medical fitness of the student training for the given profession in the sense of primary prevention. Therefore, before choosing a profession, a young person should receive a competent consultation from the field of occupational and social medicine, especially if they have health limitations. The medical service of the Federal Institute for Labor carries out appropriate socio-medical assessments and consultations in this context.

Older workers

Older workers are often mistakenly included in the group with reduced performance and confronted with prejudices that they are always sick and more likely to have work-related accidents, their physical and mental performance is lower and that they are against new things. This deficit model of older workers is scientifically untenable. An older worker is not per se less efficient than his younger colleague. Although there are some changes in performance over the years, they are not characterized only by a decrease in abilities and skills.

Age-related decline in performance in some areas is fully offset by other performance factors, although there are large individual differences. Changes in the modern world of work with a shift in the proportion of physical work in favor of mental and intellectual work are generally favorable for older employees. While 100 years ago 80% of jobs were performed by heavy manual labor, now it is only about 5%. More than 80% of today's workplaces require exclusively light physical work that can be performed by older workers without problems.

Other **age-related physiological and psychological changes** can be observed:

- **Sustained Performance**

Sustained performance, measured by maximum oxygen intake, gradually decreases after the age of 40, while this process can be compensated for a long time by regular physical exercise. Physical work is an excellent means of preventing age-related cardiopulmonary involution processes. In this context, the premature loss of a job is particularly problematic for an aging employee. The daily training of several hours suddenly disappears and the corresponding adaptation mechanisms are soon lost. "He who stood awhile stands afar off." Abilities and skills that lie idle diminish over time.

- **Support and movement apparatus**

Muscle strength decreases by about 30% on average between the ages of 30 and 65. Here too, these age-related involution phenomena can be minimized by regular exercise. The supporting and locomotor apparatus shows degenerative changes with increasing age, sometimes even reduced load-bearing capacity, caused by osteoporosis. Nevertheless, in approximately 80% of cases, the causes of back pain are not caused by the spine, but have more frequent psychosocial causes. Problems and worries, e.g. the fear of losing a job and the fact that an older person will not cope with the new requirements as well as his younger colleague, lead to an overstrain of the muscles of the back and neck, which leads to spinal problems.

- **Sense Organs**

Sight and hearing decrease in the aging process. However, one and the other can usually be compensated very well with aids (glasses or hearing aids). Good workplace lighting is also important. Older eyesight needs more light. Poor eyesight and hearing are often the reason why an older worker is worse at introducing innovations in the work process than younger colleagues, which is mistakenly explained by age-related reduced mental performance.

- **Psychomental Performance**

In contrast to physical performance, as well as sight and hearing, it remains psychomental, or intellectual performance, well over 50 years of age at a stable level. Of course, it also requires daily training here. Gainful activity with ever-new requirements usually provides optimal conditions. Scientific research has clearly shown that even in innovative workplaces, older workers can keep up. With increasing age, one can even detect increasing abilities regarding psychomental performance.

Older workers are often automatically attributed with frequent illness-related absences. This is not universally correct. As for incapacity for work, the elderly have it even lower than the young. However, the duration of incapacity for work in one case of illness increases significantly. While it is an average of six days for a person under the age of 20, it is about 23 days for a person over the age of 50.

As for the frequency of accidents, it even decreases slightly for older workers. However, while younger people tend to have injuries due to inattention, inexperience and risk-taking, injuries in older people are more often caused by a reduced reaction and slowed perception.

Changed aspect of work capacity	Preventive measures
Impaired vision	Stronger workplace lighting, panel contrast, work glasses adapted to the type of work, work without the need to change the focal point.
Impaired hearing	Clear sound signals and voice communication.
Impaired short-term memory	The necessary information will be taken over by electronic devices.
Difficulty absorbing information communicated by multiple information channels	Simplification of the work process.
Reduced intuitive understanding	Bringing a greater repetition routine into the workflow.
Reduced ability to work at a fast pace of machinery (belt production)	Adapting the pace of work equipment to the capabilities of older workers.
Less physical strength	Limitation of impact physical load and combination of standing physical effort and overheated work environment.
Reduced mobility	Avoiding workplaces with uneven floors, transporting heavy loads, vibration of machined parts and used tools, use of protective equipment.
Increased need for breaks during working hours	Organization of working time with more frequent breaks, independent work, flexible working hours.
Resistance to change	Ongoing communication with management when implementing changes at the workplace (in an individual way).

Links

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