

YOU ARE EXPECTING **A BABY**

Your guide to pregnancy
and childbirth



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Congratulations **on your pregnancy**

Pregnancy is an incredible adventure in a woman's life, to be shared with her partner, family and friends. But these nine months admittedly also cause major changes.

Thank you for choosing to give birth at the HUG Maternity. Our medical and healthcare team is here to support you throughout your pregnancy and to prepare you both for childbirth and parenthood. We will do everything we can to make this time as stress-free as possible and to ensure a smooth return home afterwards.



Monitoring your pregnancy



DID YOU KNOW?

You can access your medical file online at any time by registering at cara.ge.ch

Normal (physiological) pregnancy

Our midwives and doctors provide monitoring for pregnancies considered “physiological”—in other words, without any identified risk factors. If any complications occur during these nine months, your monitoring will be adapted under the supervision of a doctor.

If your private gynaecologist is monitoring your pregnancy and you plan on giving birth at the HUG Maternity, we will be expecting you for an initial appointment around week 36. We recommend booking your appointment in advance and bringing a copy of your pregnancy record.

To book an appointment call: ☎ 022 372 44 00



Comprehensive support programme

The Maternity offers a comprehensive support programme for mothers-to-be whose pregnancies present no particular obstetric risk. The aim is to establish a close and trusting relationship with members of the medical team. From your first appointment to the moment you go back home, you are under the care of a group of midwives. One midwife is assigned to you as a main point of contact. This familiar and reassuring environment helps to reduce apprehensions related to childbirth.

The midwives who are part of the comprehensive support programme are available 24/7.

Comprehensive support programme contact:

☎ 079 553 50 86

Global.accompagnement@hug.ch

High-risk pregnancies

Pregnancies with potential complications require special monitoring. Depending on the particular risk factors, monitoring will be provided by specialized teams made up of doctors and midwives.

The Maternity offers a range of out-patient consultations dedicated to specific conditions, such as obesity, diabetes, hypertension, multiple pregnancies, infectious diseases, prematurity, etc.

High-risk obstetrics unit

☎ 022 372 44 00

More information on specialized consultations:

➔ www.hug.ch/en/obstetrique/our-expertise



DID YOU KNOW?

HUG Maternity is the main referral center in Geneva for monitoring high-risk pregnancies. Thanks to the combination of leading medical expertise and advanced technology, the most complex cases are referred here. One third of the 4,000 pregnancies monitored each year at the HUG are considered high-risk.



“We wanted a boy for my first pregnancy. When the gynaecologist confirmed at the ultrasound that it was a boy, my husband and I both cried with emotion. Because of the difficult relationship I have with my mother, I would have needed therapy had this baby been a girl. For my second pregnancy, my husband hoped again for a boy, but I found myself wishing for a girl this time. And then Olivia was born...”

Elise, mother-of-two

Your appointment calendar

Monitoring of a normal (physiological) pregnancy includes seven pre-natal medical appointments and at least two ultrasounds (at weeks 12 and 20).

The first check-up can take place as early as the 7th week of pregnancy and will be carried out by a doctor and a midwife. Subsequent appointments are usually scheduled monthly. If your pregnancy is considered high-risk, you may require additional appointments and check-ups.

More information on monitoring and appointments:

➤ www.hug.ch/en/obstetrique/monitoring-your-pregnancy

Check-ups

During these nine months, various check-ups are offered to rule out potential complications. These include clinical examinations, measurements of weight, blood pressure, and fundal height, blood and urine tests, and listening to the baby's heartbeat.

Ultrasounds are used to determine the stage of the pregnancy and to screen for a certain number of complications affecting the baby (deformities, growth problems). They can also be used to estimate the baby's size toward the end of the pregnancy.

Fundal height is used to assess the baby's growth, the size of the uterus, and the quantity of amniotic fluid. It is measured with a tape measure.



INFO

Remember that 97 to 98% of children are born healthy.

Prenatal screening for Down Syndrome

All pregnant women are offered a first trimester screening test, but it is not mandatory. This test estimates whether there is a chance that the fetus has a chromosomal anomaly such as trisomy 21 (Down syndrome). This probability is estimated based on three factors: your age, the presence of certain markers in your blood, and nuchal translucency—the ultrasound measurement of the thickness at the back of your baby's neck (between weeks 11 and 14 of pregnancy). Depending on the risk level, further tests for diagnostic purposes may be offered (generally when the risk is above 1 in 1,000).



+ FIND OUT MORE

Are you feeling sad, depressed, or worried? You can assess your risk of perinatal depression by completing this short questionnaire:

➤ www.hug.ch/sante-psychique-perinatalite/comment-depister-depression-perinatale-quiz-epds

Non-invasive screening (Genatest®)

This test is offered from the 11th week of pregnancy to screen for Down syndrome (trisomy 21) and other chromosomal anomalies (trisomy 18 and 13) when prenatal screening indicates a risk higher than 1 in 1,000. A simple blood test is used to analyze the baby's genetic material flowing through the placenta into your bloodstream. This test does not pose any risk to your baby. If the result is abnormal (strong suspicion of Down Syndrome), this must be confirmed by an invasive diagnostic examination (chorionic villus sampling or amniocentesis).

This test is covered by the national health insurance for pregnant women whose first-trimester screening shows a moderate to high risk of trisomy. However, any pregnant woman who wishes to can undertake this test, but it will not be reimbursed by the national health insurance if the risk is below 1 in 1,000.

Prenatal consultation

From the fourth month of pregnancy, the Maternity offers every expectant mother a one-to-one consultation with a midwife. The prenatal consultation is not a medical appointment nor a childbirth preparation session. It is an opportunity for listening and discussion, to talk through your questions and doubts on pregnancy and parenthood. It may also bring to light any potential personal difficulties (for example the risk of perinatal depression) and encourages a stronger bond between mother and baby.

For more information and to book an appointment:

☎ 022 372 44 00

➤ www.hug.ch/sante-psychique-perinatalite/entretien-prenatal

This consultation can also be conducted at the family planning center:

☎ 022 372 55 00

➤ www.hug.ch/en/sexual-health-and-family-planning



Monitoring by a senior doctor

If you have private or semi-private insurance, you can choose your obstetrician from our team of senior doctors. Your chosen doctor monitors you during pregnancy, childbirth, and the post-partum period. This option is available for both normal (physiological) and high-risk pregnancies.

Further information on these special services is available in the brochure for private and semi-private patients.

Contact:

📞 022 372 44 00

Birth plan

The Maternity gives you the option to write down your wishes and expectations for the birth of your child. On the day of delivery, every effort is made to respect your wishes. However, the birth plan sometimes needs to be adjusted to ensure your safety and that of your child. Our team of midwives is available for a one-to-one consultation throughout your pregnancy.

To book a birth plan appointment:

📞 022 372 44 00

Practicalities

Now that your pregnancy has begun, you can start taking care of all the practicalities related to your pregnancy and the upcoming birth of your child.

Inform your employer

Telling your employer that you are pregnant allows them to take all necessary measures to adjust your working hours (night shifts) or your work station in order to protect your health and that of your baby.

Don't forget to ask your midwife or doctor for the OProMA form that helps your employer assess your professional tasks.

For any questions about working when pregnant, please refer to "Useful Links" (page 36).

Contact a midwife

From around the 6th month of pregnancy, we recommend choosing the midwife who will support you at home after the birth, and sharing her contact details with the medical team at HUG.

To find an independent midwife:

➤ www.recherche-sage-femme.ch

Contact a pediatrician

Contact your child's future pediatrician as early from around the 6th month of pregnancy. When your child is born, book an appointment as soon as possible, but no later than the end of the first month.

To find a pediatrician:

➤ www.amge.ch

Insure your child

Parents have a period of three months after the birth of their child to register their baby with the national health insurance. The child will be retroactively insured from the day they are born. You may also choose to start these procedures with an insurance company during your pregnancy.

Find a childcare solution

If you plan to return to work at the end of your maternity leave, you may need childcare for your baby. Nurseries and day-care centers are in high demand, so we recommend starting your search and registration as soon as possible. To register, contact your local council or, if you live in Geneva, the Geneva Early Childhood Information Office (BIPE—Bureau d'Information Petite Enfance).

BIPE Geneva City:

➔ www.geneve.ch/bureau-information-petite-enfance

Day-care centers:

➔ www.accueilfamilial-geneve.ch



Your health

A healthy lifestyle is important both for you and your baby. Here are a few essential precautions you can take.

Alcohol

Consuming alcohol, even occasionally or in small amounts, carries high risks for your baby. The safest choice is no alcohol at all during pregnancy and while breastfeeding.

Tobacco

Tobacco is harmful to both you and your baby. Quitting smoking at any stage of the pregnancy is beneficial and reduces the risk of complications both for the fetus and the newborn baby.

Drugs

Using drugs can have severe consequences on the development of your baby and may also require specific medical monitoring.

Medication

Any medication taken during pregnancy or when breastfeeding must be prescribed by a doctor or approved by a midwife or pharmacist. This also applies to alternative treatments (homeopathy, herbal medicine, etc.).



CAUTION

Avoid self-medication, even with medicines that were prescribed before your pregnancy or are available over the counter.

+ INFO

People who are part of your close circle—your baby's father, siblings, grandparents, babysitter, and anyone who will have regular contact with you or your newborn—should be vaccinated against influenza and whooping cough.

Vaccination during pregnancy

It is always better to prevent than to treat. Some infectious diseases can be avoided through vaccination. Influenza and whooping cough are particularly dangerous during pregnancy. Vaccination against these two diseases is safe and recommended during pregnancy and also during the post-partum period. It helps prevent complications for both mother and baby and protects your newborn for the first few weeks after birth.

Recommended vaccinations

We recommend vaccination against whooping cough during your pregnancy to protect your baby during the first few months of life until they can receive their own vaccination. Vaccination against influenza is offered from the start of autumn until the end of winter to protect the mother, the pregnancy, the fetus, and the newborn. If you are not immune against chickenpox, measles, or rubella, you can be vaccinated but only after the birth. This will prevent complications in a future pregnancy. Depending on the situation, vaccination against hepatitis B may also be recommended.

Please feel free to ask any questions about vaccination during your prenatal appointments.



INFO

Tobacco, alcohol, and drugs: If you are having difficulty reducing or stopping your use, or would like help:

- ▶ ask your friends or family for advice
- ▶ talk to your doctor or midwife
- ▶ contact a specialised HUG clinic for appropriate support and treatment.

Discomfort

during your pregnancy

Pregnancy causes a number of natural physical changes, which may also bring some discomfort. For most women, these symptoms disappear after childbirth. To stay well, try to remain active during the day and, if your condition allows, do some gentle, regular exercise. Eat a balanced diet and maintain good sleep habits, as much for you as for your baby.

Here are a few tips on how to limit discomfort during pregnancy. If your symptoms persist despite these measures, talk to your doctor or your midwife.

Nausea and vomiting

- ▶ If you experience morning sickness, try having breakfast in bed.
- ▶ Eat small, frequent meals (5-6 meals a day).
- ▶ Avoid food that is difficult to digest.
- ▶ Sit upright when eating.

Heartburn

- ▶ Eat small, frequent meals.
- ▶ Limit greasy, acidic, or spicy foods, and carbonated drinks. Consume coffee, black tea, mint-based products (herbal teas, sweets), and chocolate in moderation.
- ▶ Avoid lying down immediately after a meal.
- ▶ Sleep in a slightly elevated position.

Constipation

- ▶ Drink plenty of water (1.5 to 2 litres a day).
- ▶ Increase your intake of fiber (vegetables, fruit, brown bread, pulses, whole grains).
- ▶ Listen to your body and take the time to go to the toilet.

Hemorrhoids

If you experience this problem, try to overcome constipation issues (see above) and check with your doctor. Effective treatments are available.

Water retention (edema) and heavy legs

- ▶ Avoid excessive weight gain.
- ▶ Elevate your legs when resting; do pelvic movement exercises.
- ▶ Spray your legs with cool water, moving upward from feet to thighs, or have cold water foot baths.
- ▶ Wear compression stockings.
- ▶ Have massages.

Sometimes, numbness and tingling in the hands may occur during the last trimester. Talk to your doctor, especially if the symptoms worsen or if you experience loss of sensitivity.

Contractions

Your stomach hardens and you feel pain similar to period pain or cramps. Your womb may occasionally contract at any time during your pregnancy. In this case, these contractions involve little or no pain and are very different to the contractions that occur at the end of the pregnancy.



CAUTION

If before 37 weeks the contractions become more frequent or intense, and you have a history of premature birth, contact your midwife or doctor immediately.

Light dizzy spells

When lying down, the vena cava (a large vein in the abdomen) may be compressed causing a light dizzy spell. If this happens, change position immediately and lie on your left side to restore normal blood flow. Stay in this position until you feel better.

Ligament pain

During pregnancy, adapts to make space for your baby and prepare for birth. Ligaments become more flexible under the effect of progesterone. This may cause instability—as your center of gravity shifts—and pain in the pubic area, lower back, or along either side of the spine. These aches can be uncomfortable but are not dangerous.

Avoid movements that increase the pain and focus on gentle mobilization. Massages, relaxation, and the specific exercises taught in childbirth preparation classes can all help.

Muscle and back pain

Postural changes during pregnancy place extra strain on certain muscles while others work less, which can cause muscle tension and back pain. The pain sometimes radiates down the legs.

Try to stay active and opt for moderate physical activities. Heat (warm compresses or baths), massages, or physiotherapy can help.

Caution: If you experience numbness, weakness, or loss of movement in the legs, check with your doctor.



INFO

If you experience pain of any kind (muscle pain, headaches), speak to your doctor or your midwife. They will decide on the best course of treatment, as some painkillers are not safe during pregnancy.



INFO

For a healthy, happy pregnancy, take care of your sleep, stay active, and rest during the day whenever you need to. If you're feeling tired—especially if you have other children—don't hesitate to ask your family and friends for help.

Disturbed sleep

Close to bedtime, have a light meal and avoid stimulants. Enjoy some downtime and follow a gentle bedtime routine. Place a cushion under your stomach or behind your back to make you more comfortable when you are lying down.

When to seek immediate medical attention

Contact your doctor or gynecologist right away—or if they are unavailable, go to the HUG Gynecology and Obstetrics Emergency—if you experience any of the following:

- ▶ vaginal bleeding
- ▶ pain/burning when urinating
- ▶ a noticeable decrease in your baby's movements
- ▶ headaches, visual disturbances, flashing lights or bright spots in front of your eyes, or a sudden and significant weight gain
- ▶ fall or accident
- ▶ fever (above 38°C) or flu-like symptoms
- ▶ painful or regular uterine contractions before 37 weeks of pregnancy
- ▶ water breaking (amniotic fluid).

Obstetric emergencies

The emergency department is available to all pregnant women needing immediate medical care (for the reasons listed above). A midwife will assess the situation first; a doctor will be involved if necessary.

The HUG Gynecology and Obstetrics Emergency is open 24/7.

Pregnancy in daily life

Pregnancy is not an illness. However, certain adjustments are required to make it as easy and comfortable as possible

Physical activity

We recommend that you continue to exercise regularly. Choose gentle activities such as swimming or walking, and avoid high-impact sports or those involving a risk of falling. Seek advice from your doctor or midwife.

Healthy diet

Energy requirements are slightly higher during pregnancy. The idea is not to eat twice as much but twice as well, for both you and your baby to be healthy. However, your intake of vitamins and minerals should be increased.

All these needs are covered by a varied and balanced diet.

- ▶ Eat plenty of fruit and vegetables (the “five a day” rule).
- ▶ Choose foods rich in iron: meat, eggs, wholegrain foods, pulses (chickpeas, lentils, dry beans), nuts, and certain vegetables (spinach, broccoli).
- ▶ Choose foods high in iodine (fish, eggs, cheese, dried fruits, food containing iodized salt) and omega-3 fatty acids (oily fish, walnuts, rapeseed oil) that help your baby grow.
- ▶ Drink plenty of fluids (1.5 to 2 litres a day), preferably water drinks that are low in, or free from, added sugar.
- ▶ Limit your consumption of drinks containing caffeine (coffee, tea, soda, etc.).



CAUTION

Nutritional supplements should not be taken automatically. Always discuss them with your doctor or midwife. Special supplements for pregnant women are available.

+ FIND OUT MORE

The guide *J'ai envie de comprendre ma grossesse*, by Elodie Lavigne and Prof. Olivier Irion (Planète Santé Editions, 2016)—available in French only—guides expectant mothers through the physical and emotional changes of these nine months.

If you are overweight, weight gain during pregnancy should be carefully monitored. You can make an appointment for personalized, multidisciplinary care at the Maternity Weight-Control Clinic (☎ 022 372 44 00).

Prevention of food safety hazards

Take a few simple precautions to protect yourself against food poisoning and infections that can be dangerous for your baby (toxoplasmosis, listeriosis).

When you are eating outside the home, make sure salads, fruits, and raw vegetables have been properly washed. If you have any doubts, it is best to avoid them. Also avoid pre-cooked food as much as possible and don't reheat food more than once.

Foods to avoid

- ▶ Raw or unpasteurised milk and foods made with it.
- ▶ Soft and unpasteurised cheese; feta cheese and blue-veined cheeses (e.g., Gorgonzola).
- ▶ Raw eggs and preparations containing raw eggs (tiramisu, homemade mayonnaise).
- ▶ Raw or undercooked meat and fish (carpaccio, tartare).
- ▶ Poorly washed raw vegetables.
- ▶ Game.
- ▶ Energy drinks.
- ▶ Quinine-based drinks (tonic, bitter lemon).
- ▶ Alcohol.

Protect your skin

During pregnancy, your skin becomes more sensitive to the sun. Apply a high-factor sunscreen, especially on your face, to prevent the appearance of dark spots or a “pregnancy mask.” Always opt for shade, sunglasses, and a hat.

Take care of your teeth

Brush your teeth with care. Your gums are more sensitive and may bleed. Do not hesitate to consult your dentist if you have any concerns. Treatment is possible during pregnancy.

Getting around on a daily basis

Walking is good for you and your baby. When riding a bicycle or a scooter, we recommend wearing a helmet. In the car, always fasten your seatbelt, making sure the lap belt is positioned below your belly.

Planning to travel?

- ▶ Seek advice from your gynecologist or midwife.
- ▶ Prepare a first-aid kit with medicines that are safe during pregnancy.
- ▶ Find out about sanitary conditions and access to medical care at your destination.
- ▶ Make sure your insurance covers all pregnancy-related problems abroad.
- ▶ Do not travel alone.

Traveling while pregnant

Traveling during pregnancy is possible if you take all the necessary precautions. Before you plan a trip, speak to your gynecologist or midwife to rule out any contraindications and discuss preventive measures (wearing compression stockings, hydration, etc.). After seven months of pregnancy, long-distance trips are not recommended. The baby's weight can also make walking difficult.

Long-haul destinations

Pregnancy is probably not the best time for long journeys or far-flung destinations. Health and safety conditions are not always appropriate abroad. What's more, some required vaccinations and treatments are not recommended, or are contraindicated, during pregnancy.

Flying

Some airlines may ask for a medical certificate stating the stage of pregnancy and confirming that you have no contraindications to flying. To reduce the risk of thrombosis (blood clot), don't forget to stay hydrated, walk regularly, and wear compression stockings if required. For flights of more than two hours, book an aisle seat so you can get up and move around easily.

At the end of pregnancy, some airline or border authorities may refuse boarding. Always check before booking your flights.



CAUTION

Avoid high mountains (altitudes over 2,000-2,500 meters) and significant altitude changes, especially if you have any risk factors (asthma, heart failure, high blood pressure).

Emotional life and relationships

Becoming parents

Becoming parents marks a major life transition, bringing profound changes for women, men, and couples alike. Joy, sadness, anticipation—a birth can awaken many hopes and sometimes conflicting emotions. Along with the responsibility of caring for a newborn who depends entirely on you, you may also experience considerable fatigue related to pregnancy, childbirth, and disrupted sleep. An adjustment period is always needed to balance everyone's needs and expectations within the family.

Perinatal depression

Perinatal depression can develop during pregnancy or within the first year after birth. Around 13% of mothers are affected. Detection is important to prevent its impact on the pregnancy, on the mother-baby bond, and on the couple's relationship. Further information at:

➔ www.hug.ch/en/mental-health-during-perinatal-period

Staying connected

The arrival of a baby can strengthen your relationship as a couple—but it can also test it. An increasing number of separations occur at the time of birth, so it is important to communicate, to listen to each other's needs and limitations, to support one another, to be flexible and creative, while also nurturing intimacy. If you have questions or need help, contact a professional healthcare specialist.

If you are going through pregnancy alone, we recommend finding someone you trust in your circle to accompany and support you.

Being confident

Thanks to the abundance of classes and resources available today, preparing for your baby's arrival may seem easier than ever. Still, no one is ever truly ready—every baby brings surprises. It helps to accept that you can't predict or master everything about this experience. A child does not need perfect parents, but parents who are "good enough," capable of adapting to their child's unique personality and needs.

Couples and families consultation: ☎ 022 372 33 01

+ FIND OUT MORE

The Maternity has a Perinatal Unit for patients presenting a risk due to their psychological or emotional circumstances. Monitoring of these pregnancies requires personalized and multidisciplinary support so as to best prepare for the arrival of the baby.

Becoming a father

For many men, becoming a father can feel more abstract, since they don't physically carry the baby. Yet fathers also experience a wide range of emotions and often question their new role.

Future fathers are playing an increasingly active part in pregnancy and childbirth. Their presence at medical appointments provides valuable support for the mother and strengthens attachment to the baby. However, not all men feel comfortable with this involvement. It is therefore essential to talk openly together and respect each person's feelings and comfort level.

Love and sexuality

During pregnancy, sexual desire varies from one woman to another, and from one stage of pregnancy to the next. Fatigue, nausea, weight changes, and the shifting body image can all have an effect. Some women may feel more physically distant from their partner, which can be unsettling. On an emotional level, these changes can heighten sensitivity and influence libido. Communication is paramount.

Safe sexual intercourse

Some partners worry about hurting the mother or the baby, but sexual intercourse is safe during pregnancy unless your doctor advises otherwise. Orgasm and penetration do not cause miscarriages or premature births.

At the end of the pregnancy, when the baby needs more space, adjustments may be required. Couples often find it helps to focus more on tenderness and closeness.



INFO

There is no "normal" frequency for sexual intercourse during pregnancy. Listen to your body and talk to your partner.

Preparing for the arrival of your child

Childbirth preparation classes

The Maternity offers expectant parents a wide range of childbirth and parenting preparation classes, designed for every stage of pregnancy and the post-partum period. These include sessions such as *My Pregnancy*, *Pregnancy in Motion*, *Labor and Birth*, *After Birth – A New Life Begins*, as well as classes in guided relaxation, mindfulness, yoga, and aquatic exercise. You can find full descriptions for all classes on our website. These classes provide an opportunity to receive accurate, high-quality information about pregnancy, childbirth, and the first days after birth, as well as to speak with healthcare professionals.

Partners are encouraged to participate, but some sessions are for expectant mothers only. To make the most of this preparation program, we recommend starting the classes as early as the 4th month of pregnancy.

You can find descriptions of the classes and register online at:

➤ www.hug.ch/en/obstetrique/birth-preparation-courses



INFO

Basic medical insurance covers up to 150 Swiss francs of the costs relating to childbirth preparation classes.



« *“I don’t think I could have given birth without the childbirth preparation classes. The pain was what scared me the most. Fortunately, I was taught breathing techniques and knew what postures to adopt in order to manage it. My partner reminded me of the midwife’s advice and also played an important role during the delivery. Afterwards, the midwife told us we made a great team.”*

Valentine

Preparing for your stay at the Maternity

To be ready when the time comes, start preparing your own things, and your baby’s, around the seventh month of pregnancy. Below are few suggestions of what to pack.

For you:

- ▶ pyjamas and a dressing gown
- ▶ mesh underwear
- ▶ sanitary pads
- ▶ comfortable clothes
- ▶ socks and slippers
- ▶ if you are breastfeeding, nursing bras (choose one size up from your size at the end of the pregnancy) and clothes with front openings
- ▶ an outfit for going home (pregnancy maternity are the most suitable)
- ▶ toiletries
- ▶ lip balm
- ▶ a water mister to stay cool.

For your baby:

- ▶ clothes that are easy to put on (bodysuits, vests, pyjamas, hat, slippers or socks).

+ INFO

For your baby’s safety, they must always be secured rear-facing in an age-appropriate car seat for every car journey—including the trip home from the Maternity.

Visiting the Maternity

You will soon be giving birth at the HUG. Take a virtual tour of the Maternity to explore the consultation rooms, delivery rooms (including natural birthing rooms), patient rooms, facilities, nursery, and more.

➔ www.hug.ch/sites/interhug/files/visites_virtuelles/17217/index.html

Breastfeeding or bottle feeding?

The World Health Organization recommends exclusive breastfeeding during the first six months of the baby's life. From six months to two years (or longer if you wish), breastfeeding should be accompanied by the gradual introduction of solid foods. At HUG, we promote breastfeeding as a way to strengthen the bond between mother and baby and to reduce the risk of illness.

That said, breastfeeding is a personal and intimate choice, and it's important that you feel comfortable with the option that's right for you. Feeding your child, whatever the chosen method, is always an opportunity for closeness. If you have questions or doubts, do not hesitate to share them with healthcare professionals. The Maternity has a specialised breastfeeding consultation service.

Maternal breastfeeding consultation: ☎ 022 372 44 00

Preparing to breastfeed

The body prepares for breastfeeding from the early stages of pregnancy: the volume of the breast increases, the areolas darken, and the nipples harden. Breastfeeding often raises many questions and concerns, and so receiving factual information can help you make the decision that is right for you. We recommend attending the child-birth preparation classes, and remember that your partner's support is important.



DID YOU KNOW?

Breast milk meets all your baby's nutritional needs according to their age. Even a short period of breastfeeding is beneficial to your child.

Preparing your baby's room

As the weeks go by, you may feel the growing desire to set up your baby's space. Whether it's just a small corner or a full nursery, your baby initially only needs a bassinet or crib with safe bedding, and a space for diaper changes and care (for example, a changing table). If you are planning on painting the bedroom, make sure you use non-toxic paint and air the room on a regular basis.

Organizing the first days back home

To help make your return home as smooth and stress-free as possible, prepare in advance and stock up on the essentials for your baby's care. If you have other children, arrange for them to be looked after when you are staying at the Maternity. After giving birth, ask your partner, family, or friends to help you (shopping, cooking, clothes washing). All help is precious, don't hesitate to accept it



Giving birth

At the Maternity, a team of healthcare professionals (midwives, gynecologists, obstetricians, anesthetists, pediatricians, nursing auxiliaries) is available 24/7.

When to leave for the Maternity?

The following signs indicate that delivery is imminent and that it's time to go to the Maternity:

- ▶ contractions are increasingly frequent, close together and regular
- ▶ contractions are increasingly painful
- ▶ your water has broken.

Your admission

An admissions team, located at the main entrance, is available to help you register Monday to Friday 7.30 am to 5 pm. Outside of these hours, Reception is available until 8 pm. If labor has already started, admission is conducted at the Gynaecology and Obstetrics Emergency Services (24/7).

When you arrive, you are attended to by a midwife, who will assist at every stage of the birth. From the outset, they will monitor your contractions and assess your baby's well-being by recording the baby's heart rate.

Mobile phones

To avoid disturbing other patients and disrupting care, please turn off your phone in the delivery room, the continuous care unit, and the prenatal rooms. Elsewhere, phone use is permitted, but please remain discreet.



INFO

All bedrooms have lockable wardrobes. Avoid bringing large sums of money or valuables. The HUG assumes no responsibility in the event of theft or loss.

The delivery rooms

The Maternity has twelve delivery rooms, including two “natural” rooms. All the rooms are equipped with a bed, a private shower, a lockable wardrobe, and a changing table for your baby’s first care.

In addition to the standard bed, the “natural” rooms also feature a double (family) bed, allowing greater freedom of movement and the option of an unmedicated birth. It can also be used to rest after the birth. A bath is also available for you to relax during the early stages of labor or the dilation stage, though it is not used for the birth itself.

You may be accompanied by one person of your choice (partner, family member, or friend). When you are admitted, this person will receive a badge allowing free access to the delivery area.

Pain during labor

Pain during labor is one of the most common concerns for expectant mothers. Rest assured that in addition to continuous support and attentive care, the Maternity has various methods to help you manage pain throughout the various stages of labor. These include massages, warm baths during early labor, positions, use of nitrous oxide (or “laughing gas”). And, of course, the epidural—chosen by most women—remains the most effective method.

Epidural

An epidural minimises pain during delivery. This anesthesia acts locally and the dosage can be adjusted as labor progresses. In addition to being a safe and well-controlled technique, it allows you to feel contractions, maintain the urge to push, and in some cases, move your legs. It is safe for the baby and complications are rare. In the event of contraindications, alternatives are available.

The decision to have an epidural—whether a combined spinal-epidural or a standard epidural—is entirely up to you, though in some cases it may be recommended for medical reasons.

+ INFO

The anesthesiology team is available 24/7. Over 80% of women giving birth at the Maternity choose to have an epidural.

To find out more:

The Division of Anesthesiology organises a class on the epidural that you should attend before week 38 of your pregnancy. Information and registration on the website:

➔ www.hug.ch/en/information-sur-peridurale

Delivery complications

In most cases, childbirth via vaginal delivery runs smoothly. However, certain may situations require the use of instruments (forceps, vacuum extractor) or an emergency cesarean section to deliver the baby or prevent distress in the mother or baby. Cesarean sections may also be scheduled in advance for either maternal or fetal medical reasons.

Despite caring for a high proportion of high-risk pregnancies, the Maternity's cesarean section rate is low compared to the Swiss average. It was 23% in 2023 whereas the national average was 33%. A class in "giving birth differently" is available for women scheduled to have a cesarean section.

➔ www.hug.ch/en/obstetrique/birth-preparation-courses

After giving birth

After the birth, you will remain in the delivery room for two hours to allow the medical team to provide the necessary care and monitor both your health and that of your baby. If you wish, you can breast-feed your baby for the first time.

Skin to skin

Skin-to-skin contact helps your baby adjust to their new environment and strengthens the emotional bond between you. Placed naked on your chest, your baby feels warmth and comfort, which will soothe crying. Your baby recognizes your heart beat, your voice, and your smell. In the event of a cesarean section, the father provides the skin-to-skin contact instead.

This practice also supports breastfeeding, as newborns instinctively seek the breast. We encourage you to continue skin-to-skin contact when you are back home.

Rooming-in

Sometimes mothers and newborns are temporarily separated for medical or safety reasons. Rooming-in means you are authorized to have your baby with you if you have to remain in hospital for continuous care. This proximity deepens the bond at an early stage. Our team cares for both you and your baby.

Strengthening the bond with your baby

Four special rooms are available for mothers who are in a stable condition but whose babies need care in the Neonatal Unit.

This joint follow-up between the obstetrics and neonatology teams ensures continuous monitoring and provides the best possible safety and emotional closeness for both mother and baby.

Mothers can stay close to their babies to continue building the attachment that began during pregnancy.

BBvision

BBvision is a system that allows you to see your baby even when you are not physically together—for instance, if your baby is receiving care in the Neonatal Unit. The device is easy and quick to use. Through the free Scopia mobile app, you can even view your baby remotely when outside the hospital—a feature especially helpful for partners.

+ INFO

To help mothers stay close to their babies, the Maternity offers hotel-style rooms (with a kitchenette) for mothers whose newborns are still hospitalised in the Neonatal Unit after they themselves have been discharged. A contribution of 30 Swiss francs per day is requested.

The Neonatal Unit

Some babies need closer monitoring and specialized care after birth. HUG's Neonatal Unit has 17 beds and a team of caregivers, nurses, and doctors specialized in neonatology and intensive care to provide babies with care 24/7. If needed, they work in conjunction with other specialized doctors to ensure your baby receives the highest quality care, while also providing you with support.

Fetal-placental blood donation

Fetal-placental blood is the blood contained in the umbilical cord and the placenta. It is a valuable source of stem cells, used in transplants to treat children with leukemia and other serious blood diseases. If you choose to donate it, the fetal-placental blood is frozen and stored in a public cord blood bank at HUG. When needed, it may be made available anonymously to a sick child in Geneva, elsewhere in Switzerland, or abroad.

For further information:

📞 079 553 23 68

➡ www.hug.ch/sites/interhug/files/documents/don_cordon.pdf

Returning home

After an uncomplicated birth, the usual hospital stay is two to three days. An early return home within 48 hours is also possible with the help and support at home of an independent midwife. After a birth by cesarean section, the average stay is about four to five days.

Your discharge from the Maternity will be arranged in agreement with the midwife, gynecologist, and pediatrician. It will be scheduled for the morning, before 11 am. Please arrange in advance for your partner, family member, or friend to collect you. Before you leave, the care team will contact the independent midwife you've selected (and perhaps already met during your pregnancy) to share any information useful for follow-up at home.

Administrative formalities

Declaration to the registration office

All births must be registered with the Geneva Civil Registry Office. To make this process easier, there is an office located within the Maternity.

HUG birth registration office:

📞 022 372 63 92

The Maternity can also take care of these formalities for you, providing you supply all the required documents. An envelope containing all the relevant information will be given to you at your first appointment.

Declaration of paternity

The legal relationship between father and child is established automatically when the parents are married. If they are not married, the father may acknowledge paternity by making a declaration before a civil registrar—either in the commune of origin or residence of the father or the mother, or in the child's place of birth. This declaration can also be done during the pregnancy.



INFO

If you do not have a residence permit or medical insurance, please contact the Maternity Social Services team.

Financial matters

Coverage of costs associated with pregnancy

Pregnant women are exempt from paying deductibles or co-payments for maternity-related services. This includes check-ups during and after the pregnancy and childbirth, breastfeeding support, and the care provided to healthy newborns, including the baby's stay in the hospital with their mother.

Other medical services provided due to pregnancy-related complications or illnesses unrelated to the pregnancy are also covered without any out-of-pocket costs, from the 13th week of pregnancy until eight weeks after birth.

Home monitoring after the birth

After the birth, a midwife will continue your monitoring at home. Within 56 days after birth, you are entitled to 10 visits without a medical prescription—or up to 16 visits in certain situations (first child, cesarean section, multiple births, newborn with medical complications). Additional visits after the 56th day are possible but with a medical prescription. During the breastfeeding period, a maximum of three breastfeeding-related appointments are covered. All of these services are reimbursed by the basic medical insurance, with no deductible or co-payment.



DID YOU KNOW?

If your newborn baby is ill, the cost of treatment is covered by the baby's medical insurance or by the disability insurance system, which covers certain conditions present at birth (prematurity or genetic diseases for example).

Maternity leave

If you are employed, you are entitled to maternity leave. You will receive an allowance for loss of income equivalent to 80% of your average income before the birth, up to a maximum of 196 Swiss francs per day. Allowance entitlement starts on the day of the child's birth and ends after 14 weeks. To find out more about the precise conditions under which maternity allowance is granted, see:

Maternity allowance (AVS):

➔ www.ahv-iv.ch/p/6.02.e

Cantonal office for social insurance (Geneva):

➔ www.ocas.ch/apg/amat

☎ 022 327 27 27

Birth allowance

A birth allowance of 2,000 Swiss francs is granted to every child, provided the pregnancy has lasted at least 23 weeks.

For precise conditions:

➔ www.ocas.ch/af/allocation-de-naissance-et-dadoption

Family allowance

The birth of a child entitles you to a monthly family allowance. Regulated by cantonal law, the current amount in Geneva is 300 Swiss francs per month. Your employer or the Cantonal Office for Social Insurance can provide you with more information.



INFO

If you are experiencing financial difficulties after the birth of your child, do not hesitate to contact your local social services or the Maternity's social services team.

Useful links

Addiction

Division of Addiction

➤ www.hug.ch/en/addiction

Dependency Unit

➤ www.hug.ch/medecine-premier-recours/unite-dependances

Smoking Issues

➤ www.hug.ch/obstetrique/consultation-grossesse-tabac

Addiction Suisse

"Alcohol during pregnancy" brochure

➤ www.addictionsuisse.ch

Breastfeeding

Swiss Foundation for the Promotion of Breastfeeding

➤ www.allaiter.ch

Professional Association of Swiss Breastfeeding Consultants

➤ www.allaitement.ch

La Leche League

➤ www.lllfrance.org

Food

Federal Food Safety and Veterinary Office (FSVO)

Brochure (in French, German or Italian): "Eating well during pregnancy and breastfeeding"

➤ www.blv.admin.ch

Relationships and family

Protestant Family and Couples Counselling Office

➤ www.opccf.ch

Registration office

Civil Registry Office

Rue de la Mairie 37, 1211 Genève 6

☎ 022 418 66 31

(registrations of births)

☎ 022 418 66 32

(acknowledgement of paternity)

Work

State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO)

Brochure "Maternity - Protecting workers"

➤ www.seco.admin.ch

Vaccination

Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH)

➤ www.bag.admin.ch

InfoVac

Swiss information website on vaccinations

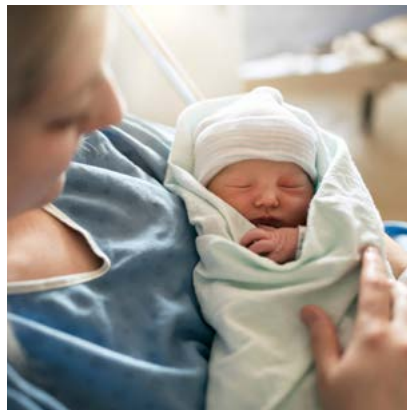
➤ www.infovac.ch

YOUR PREGNANCY CALENDAR



Childbirth preparation classes

Childbirth preparation



+ INFO

Will you soon be giving birth at Geneva University Hospitals (HUG)? Take a virtual tour of the Maternity to explore the delivery rooms, patient rooms, facilities, etc.

➤ www.hug.ch/sites/interhug/files/visites_virtuelles/17217/index.html

Active pregnancy





INFO

The Maternity offers expectant parents a wide range of childbirth and parenting preparation classes. Descriptive videos and online registration are available at:

➤ www.hug.ch/en/obstetrique/birth-preparation-courses

Returning home

