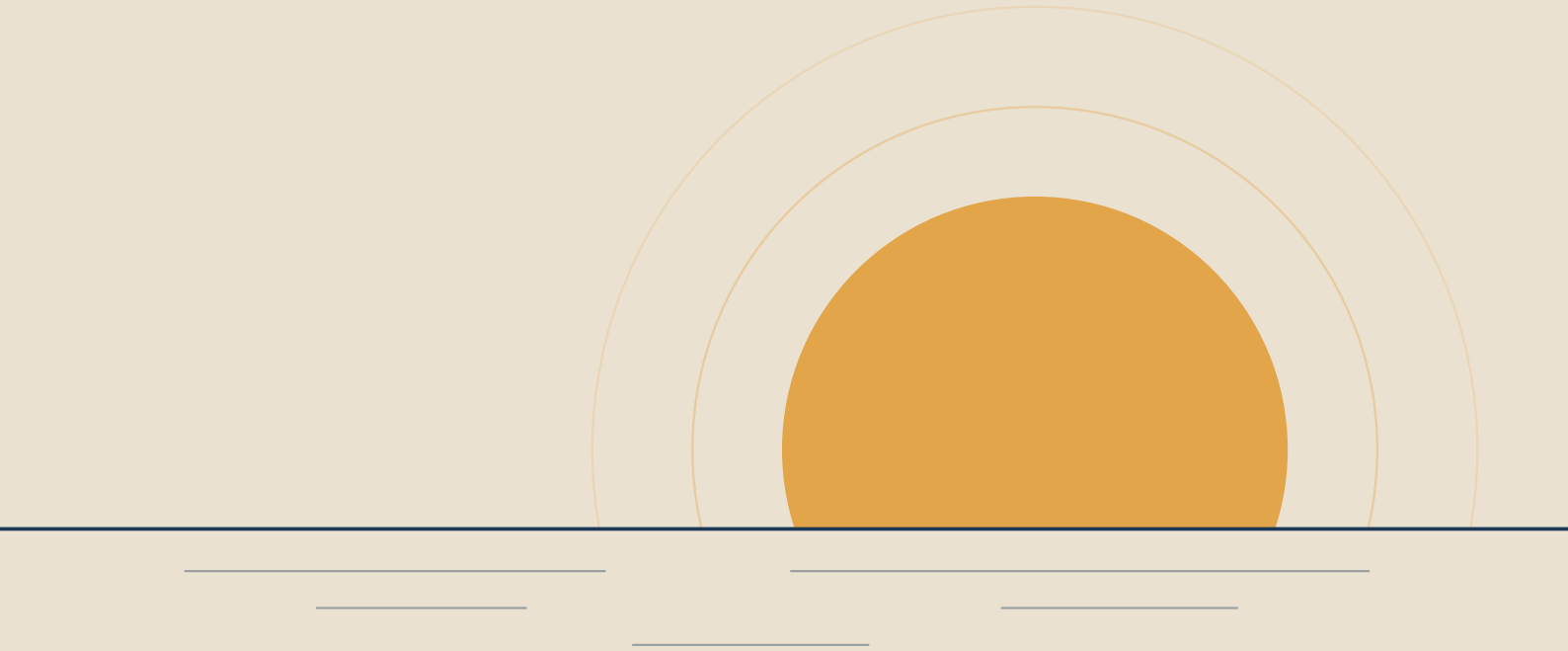
*Mamavela*

# Having a Baby in Ireland

Free HSE maternity care, maternity and paternity leave, benefits, birth registration and your baby's first checks, step by step.



Free sample

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# Welcome

You are expecting a baby in Ireland, and suddenly there is a new vocabulary to learn: the Maternity and Infant Care Scheme, the booking visit, MyWelfare, MB2, PPSN, the public health nurse. Every one of these words hides a simple step, and almost every step is free. What makes it feel hard is that the information lives on a dozen different official pages.

This book puts it all in one place, in the order you will need it. It follows your pregnancy from the first GP visit to your baby's first vaccines, and it covers the money and the paperwork alongside the care: maternity leave and Maternity Benefit, paternity leave, parent's leave, Child Benefit and the New Baby Grant, registering the birth, your baby's PPS number and birth certificate.

Every amount, duration and deadline in these pages was checked on the official source (Citizens Information, the HSE and the Department of Social Protection) on 13 October 2026. When a figure is quoted, it is the figure in force as of October 2026. Rates change, usually in January after the Budget, so the bibliography at the end gives you every address to check again.

A few promises before we start:

- No judgment. Public, semi-private or private care, epidural or none, breastfeeding or formula, going back to work at 26 weeks or taking every week of leave you can: these are your choices, and this book respects all of them.
- Every family. Married or not, solo mums, same-sex couples, parents who conceived with donor help, parents who moved to Ireland last year: there is a section written with you in mind.
- No medical advice. This book explains how the Irish system works and what official guidance says. Your GP, midwife, obstetrician and public health nurse are the people who look after you; this book helps you know what to ask them.

## How to use this book

Read Chapter 1 now, even if you are only a few weeks pregnant: it explains the free scheme you must sign up for through your GP. Then dip into the chapter you need. Chapter 11 is a month-by-month checklist you can print and tick, and Chapter 12 gives you pages to fill in with your own dates and numbers.

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2. Public, semi-private or private care, and where to give birth
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7. Paternity leave and Paternity Benefit
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9. After the birth: registering, PPS number, Child Benefit and the New Baby Grant
10. Your baby's first checks, the public health nurse and vaccines
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# Chapter 1. Your maternity care: the Maternity and Infant Care Scheme

## The short version

If you live in Ireland, or you intend to live here for at least one year (this is what "ordinarily resident" means), your maternity care is free under the HSE's Maternity and Infant Care Scheme. You do not need a medical card or a GP visit card. The scheme covers your antenatal visits, labour and the birth, and your care after the birth, for you and for your baby.

> The first practical step: once your pregnancy is confirmed, your GP applies for the scheme with you. The application form is filled in by both of you and your GP sends it to the HSE. Most GPs provide the scheme. You will need your Personal Public Service Number (PPSN).

If you do not have a GP, you can contact your local maternity unit or hospital directly for an appointment.

## What the scheme includes

According to the HSE, going public under the Maternity and Infant Care Scheme means you have:

- appointments with your GP during your pregnancy;
- appointments with midwives or an obstetrician during your pregnancy;
- medical care during labour and birth from midwives, and from an obstetrician if needed;
- a bed in a public ward at the hospital;
- a private room while you are giving birth (a single birth suite);
- an ultrasound scan (the timing depends on the hospital);
- blood tests for pregnancy;
- GP appointments for your baby's 2-week and 6-week checks, and your own postnatal check-up 6 weeks after the birth.

Citizens Information adds that the scheme gives you free in-patient, out-patient and emergency care in public hospitals for your pregnancy and your baby's birth, with no hospital charges.

## How many GP visits

The schedule depends on your pregnancy, and your GP or hospital can change it. The official descriptions:

| Source | What it says |
|---|---|
| HSE | You will see your GP at least 5 times during your pregnancy. |
| Citizens Information, Maternity and Infant Care Scheme | First pregnancy: a first examination by your GP, ideally before week 12, then 5 further examinations alternating between GP and hospital visits. Later pregnancies: a first examination and 6 further examinations. |
| Citizens Information, Antenatal visits | First pregnancy: usually 6 appointments with your GP and 6 at the maternity unit or hospital. Second or later pregnancy: usually 7 with your GP and 5 at the hospital. |
| Both | Extra appointments if you have a pregnancy-related condition (for example high blood pressure or gestational diabetes) or a twin or multiple pregnancy. With a significant illness such as diabetes or hypertension, up to 5 additional GP visits. |

After the birth, the scheme includes 2 GP visits: your baby at 2 weeks, and you and your baby together at 6 weeks.

## What the scheme does not cover

The HSE is clear that the scheme covers pregnancy care, not every illness you may have while pregnant. A urinary tract infection or a chest infection, for example, is not covered by the scheme, and you would see your GP for it in the usual way. If you choose to be a private patient of your consultant, you pay the in-patient charges and fees that go with private care (see Chapter 2).

## Checklist: getting into the scheme

- ☐ Book a GP appointment as soon as you have a positive test
- ☐ Bring your PPSN (and your partner's if you have it to hand)
- ☐ Fill in the Maternity and Infant Care Scheme form with your GP
- ☐ Decide, or start thinking about, public, semi-private or private care (Chapter 2)
- ☐ Ask your GP which maternity unit or hospital they will refer you to
- ☐ Phone the hospital to book your first hospital appointment (the "booking visit") if your GP asks you to

# End of the sample

Thank you for reading this far. We hope these first pages already feel useful, and that you can see how the rest of the book is built: clear steps, pages to fill in, sources you can check.

**The full book has 45 pages.**

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