

Pregnancy and birth in Denmark

This pamphlet is made for pregnant women who have recently moved to Denmark. It describes the health services that are available for pregnant women in Denmark as well as important advice on pregnancy and birth.

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Doctors and midwives

All pregnant women have free access to doctors and midwives throughout the pregnancy. Your doctor and midwife will examine you and make sure both you and your baby are well, and that your baby is growing and developing as expected. You will also be offered blood tests and ultrasound examinations early in your pregnancy. The examinations will show if there are any abnormalities.

A normal pregnancy lasts between 37 and 42 weeks. You will be offered the following examinations:

Pregnancy week	Doctor examination	Midwife examination	Ultrasound and blood tests
6–10	x		
8–13			Blood test
11–13			Ultrasound examination
10–15		x	
18–20		x	Ultrasound examination
25	x		
29		x	
32	x		
35		x	
37		x	
39		x	
(41)		x	
4–5 days after birth			Home visit from health visitor
1–10 days after birth		x	
5 weeks after birth (baby)	x		
8 weeks after birth (mother)	x		

Ultrasound examinations

During the first ultrasound examination in weeks 11–13, you will be examined to find out how many weeks into the pregnancy you are, and how many fetuses there are. You will be examined for signs of genetic irregularities such as Down's syndrome.

At the second ultrasound examination in weeks 18–20, the organs of the foetus will be examined to see if they are growing as expected, and the location of the placenta will be checked. You can bring a family member or friend with you to the examinations.

There are usually slightly fewer examinations with the midwife if you have been pregnant before.

If there are problems during your pregnancy, you will be offered several examinations, regardless of how many pregnancies you have had before.

Health visitors

A health visitor is a nurse with further training within children's health. They can give advice on the things you may be concerned about. They will visit you at home 4–5 days after the birth, and then regularly in your baby's first year. You can read more about health visitor's advice in the pamphlet 'The Health of Young Children' at www.sst.dk/ukraine.

Patient confidentiality

You should tell your doctor if you need an interpreter. Your doctor will order the interpreter. Doctors, midwives, health visitors and interpreters have a duty of patient confidentiality, including towards other authorities and people.

Healthy lifestyle during pregnancy

So that your child can grow and develop in the best possible way, it is important that you eat well, do not smoke, do not drink alcohol and are active during the pregnancy.

It is recommended that you take the following supplements during your pregnancy:

- 400 micrograms of folic acid per day in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy
- 10 micrograms of vitamin D per day throughout the pregnancy, and for as long as you are breastfeeding
- 40–50 milligrams of iron per day from week 10 and for the rest of the pregnancy
- ½ litre of milk or 500 milligrams of calcium per day throughout the pregnancy and breastfeeding period.

Vaccinations

In Denmark, it is recommended that pregnant women are vaccinated against influenza, whooping cough and COVID-19. You can talk with your doctor or midwife about which vaccinations you should have.

Discomfort and pain during pregnancy

When you are pregnant, it is normal to have discomfort such as fatigue, nausea, constipation, haemorrhoids, heartburn, vaginal discharge, Braxton Hicks contractions (false labour), and general aches and pain in the body, for example back or legs. Talk to your doctor or midwife if you are concerned or if it is very uncomfortable.

If you start bleeding or experience symptoms such as constant headaches, dizziness or swelling, you should always contact your doctor, midwife or place of birth to discuss your symptoms.

The baby's movements in the womb during pregnancy

During pregnancy: Around week 18–22, you will begin to feel your baby moving. From week 24, it is important that you pay attention to the baby's movements every day. You should contact your midwife or doctor if you notice significantly fewer movements.

Going into labour

In Denmark, you can give birth in a hospital or at home, and in some regions in a private midwife clinic. If you want to give birth at home, a midwife will come to your home once labour starts. Your doctor will discuss your options with you at the first examination.

Always contact the place of birth when your waters break. Tell them if your waters are not clear. If labour starts in another way, call the hospital first to talk with your midwife about how you are feeling and what signs your body is showing that the birth has started. They will then decide when you should go to hospital, and will be ready for you when you get there.

If the birth does not start by itself. If your pregnancy lasts more than 41 weeks, your midwife or doctor will talk with you about starting the birth. You decide yourself whether the birth should be induced, so make sure to have a thorough discussion with the staff about when it should happen and what it means for you and your baby.

Planned caesarean section: In some situations, the baby cannot be born vaginally, so it may be necessary to plan a caesarean section in advance. A planned caesarean section is safe for both mother and baby. If you are going to give birth with a planned caesarean section, your midwife will prepare you for what will happen.

The birth

When you get to the hospital, your midwife will guide you through the different stages of childbirth. All births are different, and women react differently to pain and childbirth. There are several options for pain relief during childbirth, and your midwife will work with you to assess what you need.

Emergency caesarean section

If there are sudden complications during the birth, you may need an emergency caesarean section. You can be certain that the staff know what they are doing, and that they will do everything to ensure that you and your child have the best possible birth.

Straight after birth

If it is your first child, you will usually be admitted to a maternity ward or 'patient hotel'. Many who have previously given birth will return home within the first 6–8 hours after the birth and will be contacted by their midwife the following day. Everyone who comes home within the first 72 hours will be visited by a health visitor after 4–5 days. If you are in hospital for longer, the health visitor will make an appointment with you for a home visit.

The days after the birth: You may experience pain in your uterus which is a sign that it is contracting. This is called after-pains. You will bleed somewhat in the first few days especially, but this will slowly reduce. Talk with your doctor or health visitor if you have any discomfort that you cannot explain or if it does not stop.

Examinations after the birth

All newborn babies will be examined for a number of diseases within 72 hours of birth through a blood test taken from the heel. You will only be notified of the result if something is wrong. All children will also have a hearing test. This examination will not cause pain to the baby.

Many children have jaundice after being born. This is completely normal. It is only if your child has severe jaundice and becomes lethargic and won't feed that they will receive light treatment in hospital. Breastfeed your child as often as possible – this helps clear the jaundice. If you have concerns, contact your doctor, health visitor or place of birth.