

GIVING BIRTH IN A NEW LAND

A guide for women new
to Canada and their families

Part 4 – Having Your Baby

You are pregnant. Congratulations!

This resource will help you learn more about having a baby in Canada. The way things happen here may be different from the country you came from. This resource focuses on Ontario.

There are 4 parts to this resource. This is part 4 of 4. All the parts can be downloaded at www.beststart.org/resources/rep_health.

Make sure you have access to the information you need.

- Part 1: Getting the help you need
- Part 2: Finding the health care you need during pregnancy
- Part 3: Getting ready for your baby
- **Part 4: Having your baby**



The most common options

- You can choose to have your baby in a hospital, with a doctor or a midwife.
- You can choose to have your baby in your home, with a midwife.

You can give birth at home if you have a healthy pregnancy and your health care provider does not expect any problems during childbirth.

Doctors and midwives are covered under the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP). You may also be able to receive free services from a midwife if you are not covered under the Ontario Health Insurance Plan.

Learning about your hospital

If you are planning to give birth in a hospital, call to find out if you and your support person can do a hospital tour. Sometimes, these tours are arranged through prenatal classes.

Hospital tours are very useful. You will have a chance to learn the way things happen and the rules at your local hospital. It will also give you a chance to ask questions about what you prefer when it comes to language, cultural, or religious practices.

In many hospitals, it is better to pre-register before you arrive to deliver your baby.

Call your hospital, or ask your health care provider to find out what is normal at your hospital.

- In some cases, pre-registration is done at the same time as the hospital tour.
- In other hospitals, you can simply arrive when you begin labour.
- You will need to show your medical insurance card (OHIP or private) and identification.
- You will need to sign consent forms. Make sure you understand what you are signing.
- If you do not understand, ask for an interpreter.



What to expect before and during labour at a hospital

- Prepare a small suitcase before your due date. Remember to include your medical insurance card. A sample list of things to bring is available at www.hospitalbag.org/print-hospital-bag-checklist.pdf.
- In most hospitals, you can have one or two people with you during labour. You need to check the rules that apply at your hospital. Your husband or partner can attend the birth but does not have to.
- You may have cultural preferences such as being covered during birth, having only female staff helping you, having the father announce the sex of the baby, etc. Make sure to tell your health care provider what you prefer before you begin labour. **Write it in your birth plan and say it again when you go to the hospital.** The hospital may not be able to provide you with all that you prefer, but will try to. You need to be flexible because events may change during labour. You may need to have a caesarean section (an operation to remove the baby, also called a “c-section”). The health of the mother and baby is always the most important concern.
- Once your baby is born, the umbilical cord will be cut. The hospital staff will make sure your baby is breathing properly and will do some tests to make sure the baby is healthy. You will then have your baby in your arms.
- You may ask for your baby to be undressed, for skin-to-skin contact. This is a good way to bond with your baby and helps your baby to learn to breastfeed. Talk to your baby and start breastfeeding during the first hour. During that time, the hospital staff will make sure your health is good.

What to expect after childbirth in a hospital

- In Canada, while you are in the hospital, **you will be encouraged to take care of your baby**. Try to learn as much as possible from the hospital staff. Your partner and anyone who will help you at home can also learn about feeding and caring for the baby. This will be helpful to you, too, when you go home!
- The hospital staff may teach you how to give your baby a bath, how to handle your baby safely, and how to make sure your baby is comfortable. Try to bathe your baby yourself at least once while you are in the hospital.
- You can have visitors in the hospital. Each hospital has its own rules. In most cases, the husband or partner can visit as much as needed. Other visitors can only come at certain hours of the day and most hospitals only allow two of them at the same time. It may be possible for your own children to visit you, but not other people's children, depending on the hospital. Find out what the rules are when you do the hospital tour.
- You will receive all the meals you need in the hospital. If you cannot eat some foods because you have allergies or cultural preferences, make sure you let the staff know when you first check into the hospital. Family and friends may be allowed to bring in some of your favourite foods.
- You will be encouraged to have a shower during your time in hospital. This will help prevent illness for you and your baby. This may be different from how things are done in your own country but be aware that the water is very safe and clean in Canada.
- More tests may be done on you and on your baby after the birth. These include blood tests and a hearing test for the baby. This is normal and will help find health problems before you go home. You may also be asked if you wish to have a visit by a Public Health Nurse after you go home. This service is free as part of the **Healthy Babies Healthy Children** program in Ontario and you do not need a OHIP card.
- Most women and their babies stay in the hospital only one or two days after the baby is born. If there are health problems, you or your baby may need to stay longer, for example, if your baby is born very early.

Forms to fill out

- Staff at the hospital or your midwife will provide you with a form for Newborn Registration from Service Ontario. It is important to register your baby's birth in Ontario. By doing so, your baby will have a birth certificate which will be used throughout life to obtain health care, a passport, and many other services. If you need help to fill out these forms, ask your nurse for help. You can also apply on-line at <https://www.orgforms.gov.on.ca/IBR/start.do>.
- The hospital will ask you to fill out forms so your baby will receive a Health Card from OHIP. If you are covered by OHIP, your baby will also receive coverage. If your coverage is short-term (for example, if you are on a work permit), your baby will be covered for the same length of time as you are. If your situation is different or you need more information, call Service Ontario's INFOLine at 1-866-532-3161.



Breastfeeding

- Breastfeed your baby shortly after birth. The first milk that you produce is called colostrum. It contains protein, minerals, and protection from illness that your baby cannot get any other way.
- Breastfeeding may take time to learn. You can get help from the hospital nurses while you are in the hospital or at home from public health nurses. Make sure you know how to tell if your baby is breastfeeding well. If you or your baby are having any problems, or if breastfeeding is uncomfortable, get help early.
- It is not a good idea to give formula to your baby as it may cause problems with breastfeeding. Also, some babies are confused about how to breastfeed when given artificial nipples and bottles. Breastfeed your baby without giving any other food or drink until your baby is 6 months old. Breast milk is free and just right for your baby. After 6 months, slowly introduce your baby to solid foods. Continue to breastfeed your baby until two years of age and beyond.
- Many programs and groups offer support to breastfeeding mothers in Ontario. Call your public health unit or talk to your health care provider if you have any questions about breastfeeding when you go home. Help on breastfeeding from public health is free.



Taking care of yourself and your baby at home

Giving birth is a normal part of life. In Canada, women are encouraged to do normal activities shortly after giving birth.

- Make sure you get enough rest.
- Eat a variety of foods.
- Do light activities if you are feeling well.
- Going outdoors will be very good for your mental health.

Other tips for new mothers

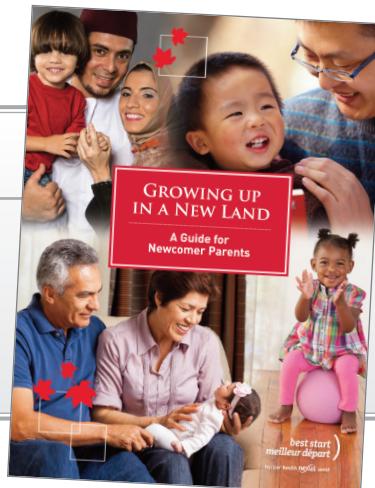
- Accept help from someone you trust. Almost 4 out of 5 mothers feel sad, irritable, very tired, overwhelmed, have changes in their sleeping or eating patterns. This is called Postpartum Blues or “Baby Blues”. This is normal. It happens in the first few days or weeks after the baby is born. If these feelings last more than two weeks, contact your health care provider. Visit www.lifewithnewbaby.ca for more information.
- Your health care provider will want to see you and your baby a few days after the birth. At this time, ask questions about baby care, breastfeeding, health, or any other concern you may have. You will also need to see your health care provider when the baby is two months old for immunizations (needles). Your child will need to be immunized to go to school in Ontario.
- Your newborn may cry a lot. It is important to comfort your baby when he needs it. Never shake a baby! Shaking a baby can damage a baby’s brain or kill the baby. You should also know that hitting a child is not acceptable in Canada. Your Public Health Nurse can help you find programs to learn about parenting and child discipline.
- It is best to give your body time to rest and rebuild itself between pregnancies. If possible, wait at least two years before you get pregnant again. Discuss this with your partner or husband. Talk to your health care provider about choices that can help to prevent pregnancies.

Use the services in your community

- Women in Ontario have many programs that can help them when they go home with a new baby. Call your public health unit to find out about the programs in your area, such as the Healthy Babies Healthy Children program.
- Home visits are part of the Healthy Babies Healthy Children program. This may be available to you, even if you do not have a OHIP card. The Home Visitor will phone you before she comes. The Home Visitor will answer your questions. Write down your questions before the visit.
- The Ontario Early Years Centres are for parents and their children up to age 6. These centres offer many programs where you can meet other parents with young children. You can also find out about other services for parents in these centres.
- You may be eligible for maternity and parental benefits through Employment Insurance if you, or your husband/partner, have been contributing to this plan through work. Information is available through Service Canada.

Growing Up in a New Land

This resource will help you with the next steps. It contains information on culture, language, learning health and safety. It is for newcomer parents of children 0-6 years old. You can download it at: www.beststart.org/resources/hlthy_chld_dev



Telehealth Ontario

If you have any questions or concerns about your health or your baby's health when you go home, call your doctor, midwife, or public health unit RIGHT AWAY. You can also call Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.



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