



## Giving birth in Finland

- How the labor and delivery of a baby is arranged varies between different cultures, societies and healthcare systems. In Finland childbirths are taken care of in the public maternity hospitals, and there are no private maternity hospitals. However, it is possible to choose a private pre-natal maternity clinic. You can hire a doula (non-medical support person) for the childbirth if you like, and there are also a few mid-wives who handle home births.
- You can choose yourself in advance which maternity unit in your district you would like to give birth in. If the maternity unit is crowded, mothers are sent to other hospitals to ensure safe delivery. All maternity hospitals arrange guided tours of the unit and the delivery rooms in advance for parents-to-be.
- During the pregnancy there are two voluntary ultrasound screenings performed free of charge: early pregnancy ultrasound for screening chromosomal and structural abnormalities; and a structural ultrasound scan, where you can also wish to determine the sex of the baby.

### Labor and delivery – what are my options?

- You cannot voluntarily opt for a caesarian section without medical reasons – the decision is always done by a doctor. However, in case of diagnosed fear of labor it is possible to get a planned C-section without medical reasons.
- You can choose if you want to use pain relief, and what kind of pain relief you prefer. Water birth, acupuncture and other alternative pain relief techniques are limitedly available in the public maternity hospitals – you can enquire them from the mid-wife.
- It's not possible to choose your midwife or doctor, it will be determined by who happens to be on duty when you arrive. You can ask for a female midwife if you prefer it, and your wish is likely to be taken into account if possible.
- If you would like to perform some ceremony during the labor or the birth of the baby, it's better to discuss the arrangements in advance with the midwife.



## Child health guidelines and recommendations

- In Finland guidance in matters relating to child health is provided by public health nurses and physicians. Child health guidance provided to newborn babies and their families is a natural continuation of prenatal and maternity guidance, and extends to all children under school age.
- According to the recommendation in force in Finland (WHO), breast milk suffices as the only nutrition for the baby for the first six months. After that, it is recommended that breastfeeding is continued until the age of one, along with other food.
- Because there is so little sunlight during the winter in Finland, a supplement vitamin D is recommended. Vitamin D is especially important to dark-skinned children, since their skin produces less vitamin D than does light skin.
- There are certain vaccinations for children offered free of charge according to the national vaccination program at the public child health clinics.
- The recommendations concerning the health and nutrition during pregnancy as well as of the baby vary significantly around the world, yet there are healthy babies born and raised everywhere – remember that you are free to use your own judgment and make decisions that you think are best for your child.
- **In case of any questions or concerns related to your pregnancy, delivery or taking care of the baby, don't hesitate to ask from your own pre-natal maternity clinique!**

## More information in English

- Baby Journey - Guide to a pregnant mother (<http://bit.ly/1heBofD>)
- We're having a baby - A guidebook for expectant parents (<http://bit.ly/167ZsvO>)
- Having children in Finland (<http://bit.ly/1gLdvH>)