

Having a baby in Germany

First of all, congratulations! Having a baby in Germany will be a wonderful experience. Here is a checklist; below is an explanation of all the points as well as a list of useful phrases and vocabulary.

At the beginning of the pregnancy

- ☐ Let your German employer know that you/your wife are expecting
- ☐ Inform your health insurance and find out what they will cover
- ☐ Find an obstetrician (Ger. "Frauenarzt - Geburtshelfer") and make an appointment
- ☐ Make sure you are given a "Mutterpass" (booklet in which all the examinations and tests will be recorded)
- ☐ Attend regular medical examinations: up to the 32nd week, every four weeks; after that, every fortnight.

4-6 months pregnant

- ☐ Find a midwife (Ger. "Hebamme") and make an appointment
- ☐ Find a hospital (Ger. "Krankenhaus" or MVZ ("Medizinisches Versorgungszentrum")), a birthing centre (Ger. "Geburtshaus") or a midwife who will deliver at your home, depending on your choice of delivery
- ☐ Organize a tour of the hospital/birthing centre and make sure it has all the facilities you will need/want (home birth: ask the midwife what you will need)
- ☐ Decide on the courses you would like to take, e.g a birth preparation course (Ger. "Geburtsvorbereitungskurs")
- ☐ Future mother: find out if you are entitled and how to apply for "Mutterschaftsgeld" (maternity allowance)
- ☐ Future father: ask for leave at work so that you will be around during the delivery and the first few days afterwards
- ☐ Find out at the "Jugendamt" (Youth Welfare Office) the options available for a "Krippenplatz" (day care place) or a "Tagesmutter" (childminder) as well as for the kindergartens

Before delivery

- ☐ Make sure you have all the documents necessary for the birth registration (parents' passports, birth certificates and marriage certificate) translated into German
- ☐ Buy the baby clothes, linen, etc you will need for the first few days/weeks
- ☐ Prepare the baby's room

This information was written by Germans for our Indian guests. It is intended as an aid. We assume no liability for translation errors, currentness or accuracy of the information provided. Thanks for your understanding.

- ☐ Find a Paediatrician (Ger. "Kinderarzt")
- ☐ Prepare the forms for the "Elterngeld" (parental benefits)
- ☐ Future father: if desired, request "Elternzeit" (parental leave) at work
- ☐ Organise a babysitter/help for your other children during and shortly after the delivery
- ☐ Prepare all necessary personal items for your check-in at the hospital, including
 - Comfortable clothes for breast feeding
 - Slippers
 - Clothes to return home in
 - Baby clothes, usually size 56
 - Baby car seat
- ☐ If you haven't already done so, learn the German vocabulary on page 6

After the birth

- ☐ Register your child's birth at your local city council or have the hospital do this for you
- ☐ Register your child at the Indian Consulate
- ☐ Inform your health insurance of the birth
- ☐ Apply for the maternity allowance
- ☐ Apply for "Elterngeld" (parental benefits)
- ☐ Apply for "Kindergeld" (child benefits)
- ☐ Find a "Rückbildungskurs" (after-birth course) or organise one through your midwife
- ☐ Organize regular home visits from your midwife

Having a baby in Germany

There are many options available to parents-to-be.

Choosing an obstetrician (Ger. “Frauenarzt - Geburtshilfer”)

Hospitals or clinics are not allowed to offer outpatient services, except for the registration appointment. So, these are your options:

- Obstetrician at a MVZ (“Medizinisches Versorgungszentrum” – medical care centre) attached to a maternity clinic – you will be monitored by a doctor who is a member of the MVZ throughout the pregnancy and the delivery, but there is no guarantee that you will know the doctor who is on call when you deliver your baby.
- Obstetrician with a private surgery – you will be monitored by this doctor until the end of the pregnancy; the delivery will be monitored by a different doctor at the clinic/hospital.
- Obstetrician with a private surgery and “beds” in a hospital, ie one who has a contract with a particular hospital (Ger. “Belegarzt”) - There are very, very few of these. You will be monitored by the same doctor throughout the pregnancy at the surgery and during the delivery at the hospital. However, these doctors sometimes work in a team, so there is no guarantee that “your” doctor will be on call when you deliver.

Tips for your doctor’s appointment

- See *Making an appointment with a doctor*.
- Take a dictionary (online) with you (or a bilingual friend!)
- You may take your children to the appointments: they can either come in with you to the examination room or some doctors have a play area.
- You will not be given an examination gown, so dress accordingly.

Midwife

The main responsibility for the delivery lies with the midwife (Ger. “Hebamme”). In a hospital they will be monitored by the obstetrician on call. In Germany, midwives are licensed professionals, who will perform check-ups, including blood tests, on mothers and babies from the beginning of the pregnancy up to the first three months of the baby’s life. They will accompany and support you during all this time and answer all the questions you may have on the pregnancy and the baby. The appointments will take place at your home, in their practice or birthing centre (Ger. “Geburtshaus”).

Some midwives will deliver at your home or in their birthing centre. These can be found online or in the [Yellow Pages](#). Others only work with certain hospitals, so you can ask the hospital to suggest some names. Otherwise, ask among your friends and acquaintances. They may know of one who speaks English.

The midwife can give you a tour of the hospital. This is important if you have any special wishes for the delivery. She will also advise you on birth preparation courses (Ger. “Geburtsvorbereitungskurs”) or other courses. Birthing centres offer a wide range of services and courses too. These are a good way to get to know other mothers-to-be and practice your German!

Mutterpass and Medical examinations

As soon as your pregnancy is confirmed, you'll be issued with a *Mutterpass*. This is a booklet in which all the examinations and tests will be recorded. It is a very important document which you will need to take to all appointments because the doctor/midwife delivering your baby may not be the same one monitoring the pregnancy.

You will have to attend regular medical examinations during your pregnancy. Up to the 32nd week, you will be going to the doctor every four weeks. After that, every fortnight.

Delivery

There are three options available in Germany:

- **Delivery in a hospital** – hospitals with a maternity clinic have all the expertise and equipment necessary for deliveries. Babies are delivered by staff or subcontracted midwives and/or staff doctors. Some of these hospitals also have the specialist paediatric care facilities (Ger. "Kinderklinik"). If they don't and your baby needs extra care, make sure there is one nearby. If you pre-register at the hospital, your check-in when you are due will be much quicker. At pre-registration they will also offer you a tour of the facilities, provide you with further information, and enquire about the type of room you would prefer (private or shared). Make sure you ask what documents and information they will need when you check-in, as well as any other things you should bring with you for your stay. You will typically be in hospital for three days, although for a Caesarean Section (Ger. "Kaiserschnitt") it will be longer than this (five days).
- **Birthing centre** (Ger. "Geburtshaus") – a team of midwives may also deliver babies at a specialist practice. This is similar to a home delivery, just not at your own home. All costs are covered by your insurance except for a fee charged by the practice for being on call for the delivery. In an emergency you will be transferred to a hospital. After delivery you will remain about 2 to 3 hours at the birthing centre and then you will be visited by your midwife daily at home for the next 10 days and after the 11th day until 12 weeks up to 16 times more.
- **Home delivery** – some midwives will happily deliver your baby at home. All costs are covered by your insurance except for a fee charged by the midwife for being on call. In an emergency you will be transferred to a hospital. After delivery the midwife will remain about 2 to 3 hours with you at home and then you will visit you daily at home for the next 10 days and after the 11th day until 12 weeks up to 16 times more.

Don't forget to have these things with you: your "Mutterpass", a dictionary (online) and a list of useful vocabulary and phrases (see below).

After birth

Babies will be examined by a Paediatrician at the hospital and remain close to you unless there is a need for special care at a "Kinderklinik" (Paediatric clinic). If you have delivered in a midwife's birthing centre or at home, the midwife will perform the first examination of the baby ("Untersuchung 1 (U1)"); for the second examination (at 3-10 days of age), you will need to go to a Paediatrician. Make sure your "Mutterpass" is completed with all the necessary information, as well as the baby's equivalent, the "Kinderuntersuchungsheft". Both will be needed for subsequent check-ups at your doctor and the Paediatrician. A record of the birth is also important for the Birth Certificate.

Birth Certificate

Hospitals and birthing centres offer a registration service for new births. They will ask for certain documents, such as the parents' passports, birth certificates and marriage certificate. These will have to be translated into German! They will then deal with your local "Standesamt" (registry office). The registry office will also usually inform the "Einwohnermeldeamt" (residents' registration office). If your baby was born at home, you will have to register the baby yourself.

Be aware that children born in Germany of non-German parents do not automatically become German citizens.

You will also wish to [register your child at an Indian Consulate](#).

State benefits for parents

Applications for these benefits are complex and in German. You may wish to ask your employer, colleagues or friends to help you fill out the forms and send in your applications. For information from the official website in English, go [here](#).

- "Elterngeld": If you were working before having your baby and have long-term residency in Germany, you may be eligible for parents' benefits (as long as you don't go back to work full-time soon after the birth). This subsidy is not available for housewives. The applications and further details can be found [here](#) (website in German). The employer should be informed up to 1 week after the baby's birth. This benefit is given to parents for 12 months, or 14 if the father takes two months paternity leave. Alternatively, part-time work allows for up to double this duration, at a lower rate. The amount depends on the income before the birth but ranges from €300 to €1800 with no employment, less for part-time workers.
- "Mutterschaftsgeld": Under certain conditions (mothers who were employed during the pregnancy), you may apply for this maternity allowance from your statutory health insurance and it covers six weeks before and eight weeks after the birth. Further information can be found [here](#) (in German).
- "Kindergeld": Parents receive child benefits when they live long-term in Germany, unless they are here only for study. For the first and second child, this benefit amounts to €194 each, for the third €200 and for the fourth or more €225 per month. The "Familienkasse" (Department for Child Services) of the "Bundesagentur für Arbeit" (Federal Employment Agency) is responsible for this benefit. Your local office can be found [here](#). There is also information on [child benefits for foreigners](#) (in German).

Vocabulary in German

In order to practice your German, you could read the magazine [Wo bekomme ich mein Baby?. It contains plenty of information on having a baby in Germany.](#)

Otherwise, here are some important words and phrases.

German	English
Amnioskopie	examination of the amniotic cavity and fetus
Becken	pelvis
Dammschnitt	episiotomy
Einlauf	enema
Fieber	fever
Fruchtblase	amniotic sac
Geburtsverlauf	during labour
Hecheln	pant
Infusion	slow injection of medicine into your veins
Kaiserschnitt	Caesarean Section
Kissen	pillow
Muttermund	cervix
Narbe	scar
Operation (OP)	surgery/operation
Pressen	push
Schmerzen	pain
Ultraschall	ultrasound
Untersuchung	examination
Wehen	contractions
Ich muss auf Toilette	I have to go to the toilet.
Kann ich duschen?	Can I have a shower?
Kann ich in die Badewanne?	Can I have a bath?
Ich möchte schlafen.	I'd like to sleep.
Ich möchte eine andere Position einnehmen.	I'd like to change position.
Ich möchte mich auf die Seite/Rücken legen.	I'd like to lie on my side/back.
Wird das weh tun?	Will that hurt?
Mir ist kalt/heiß.	I'm cold/hot.
Ich habe Durst/Hunger.	I'm thirsty/hungry.
Mir ist schwindelig.	I'm dizzy.
Ich muss mich übergeben.	I need to be sick.
Ich habe Kopfschmerzen/Rückenschmerzen.	I have a headache/backache.
Ich möchte etwas gegen die Schmerzen haben.	I'd like something for the pain.
Ich habe Krämpfe (in den Beinen/im Bauch).	I have cramps (in my legs/stomach)
Wir müssen die Plazenta holen.	We have to take out the placenta.
Ich blute stärker als normal.	I'm bleeding more than normal.