

Checklist for pregnancy, maternity protection, parental allowance & parental leave

This checklist was compiled privately from several sources and personal experiences and is only meant as an informal help. Please make sure to check all the legal regulations.

The Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth provides information in English for families, visit <https://www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/meta/en/families>

The University of Bremen also has a [Family Welcome Website](#)

After becoming aware of the pregnancy

- The **first appointment with the gynaecologist** (*Frauenarzt*) usually takes place at around 6 weeks of pregnancy. The gynaecologist will determine your estimated date of delivery (*Entbindungstermin*, commonly referred to as *Termin*, due date) and you will be given a mother's booklet (*Mutterpass*). It is essentially a passport to track the progress of your pregnancy and document all pertinent information such as the results of all tests and examinations made during your pregnancy. It should be carried with you at all times during your pregnancy. Appointments will then take place every 4 weeks if the pregnancy goes well and will become more frequent from pregnancy week 36 onwards. You can alternate appointments between midwife (*Hebamme*) and gynaecologist. Ultrasounds will take place at around 12, 20 and 32 weeks.

☐ At the first or second appointment with your gynaecologist (*Frauenarzt*), you can ask for a **pregnancy certificate** from the gynaecologist to justify your due date to your employer.

- There is no obligation to communicate the pregnancy with your supervisor / group leader. However, you can rely on maternity protection only if the employer is aware of the pregnancy.

☐ **Look for a midwife for pre- and aftercare** (costs are covered by the health insurance). The midwife can do examination during the pregnancy and will come to you regularly after the birth to help you with taking care of the baby, including breastfeeding. <https://hebammensuche-bremen.de/> lists some midwives, also with the language they offer, but others are available, ask around!

☐ When you are ready, **inform your supervisor / group leader about the pregnancy and expected date of birth** (see below).

☐ **Inform Human Resources** ([Personaldezernat](#), look for the person responsible *Ansprechpartner/-innen* for your department) **about the pregnancy and expected delivery date** (you may give a copy of your *Mutterpass* where personal information are crossed out and only the name and the expected delivery date are readable, or you may show the certificate from your gynaecologist). HR will inform you of the official date of your maternity leave (*Mutterschutz*), which starts 6 weeks before your due date.

- Human Resources should inform the office responsible for Health and Safety Management, [Referat 2 Arbeitsschutz- und Gesundheitsmanagement](#) about your pregnancy. They should in turn contact you to conduct an evaluation of your working conditions in cooperation with the people involved (you're your supervisor/group leader, lab manager, possibly university doctor) and in accordance with the Maternity Protection Act and the Maternity Protection Directive (*Mutterschutzgesetz und Mutterschutzrichtlinienverordnung*).

☐ **Inform your health insurance of your pregnancy and due date.** In order to pay the maternity leave allowance (*Mutterschutzgeld*) they will require the certificate of the presumed delivery date, which you will receive from the gynaecologist about 7 weeks before your due date.

- **Important:** from the beginning of pregnancy until four months after delivery, the termination of the employment is, with a few exceptions, not possible.

• **Good to know:** for fixed-term contracts (e.g. those with **§2 Abs. 1 WissZeitVG**), the time which is not worked during maternity and parental leaves (*Mutterschutz* and *Elternzeit*), as well as reduction of working-time by at least 1/5 of your working time, is compensated after coming back to work. In principle, you could get a new contract (which is seen as a contract extension) to compensate for the time of your maternal and parental leaves and for your reduction of working time (*Nachholen von Zeiten*). However, this is not automatic in all cases! Check early with HR if you are eligible in order to avoid bad surprises. You will also have to apply to get this extension of working time with a new contract. HR should be able to give you an estimate of what time you will be entitled to compensate, so it is best to communicate with them as much and as early as possible.

During pregnancy

- ☐ **Get information on the different places for birth** (see below section on “Where to give birth?”).
- ☐ **Sign up for a birth preparation course** (*Geburtsvorbereitung*). The financial cost of this course is also covered by the health insurance. Some health insurances even pay for the participation of the father in the birth preparation course.
- ☐ **If you are a GLOMAR PhD student**, inquire for the available [support of equal opportunity](#)
- ☐ **For non-married couples, do a paternity recognition** (*Vaterschaftsanerkennung*). Without it, the father does not have any rights and duties, and is basically not recognised as the father. When giving birth, bring this paternity recognition to the place of birth.
- ☐ **Make a plan about how you want to organise parental leave and allowance** (*Elternzeit* and *Elterngeld*). The German system for parental leave offers a lot of flexibility, but some choices can have far-reaching financial implications. Therefore, it is good to familiarise yourself with the system and to make different simulations under different scenarios, for example with [this official website](#). For a detailed explanation on *Elternzeit*, *Elterngeld* and *Elterngeldplus*, [read this comprehensive leaflet](#) from the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth.
- Once you have an idea on how you would like to organise parental leave and allowance, you may also visit the office for parental allowance (*Elterngeldstelle*) to get some advice from professionals.
- ☐ **First contact with potential day care centres** (generally termed *Kita*, see below section on “Childcare in Germany”). It is worthwhile to start early and already look for options during pregnancy.
- ☐ **Choose a paediatrician**. The paediatrician will take care of regular child examination (*Untersuchung*) and whenever the kid is sick. If you want to do an *Ambulante Geburt* (see below section on “Where to give birth?”), you will need to have seen the paediatrician before the birth.

In the week before maternity leave

- ☐ **Ask your gynaecologist for a certificate of the presumed delivery date and submit it with the application for maternity leave allowance to your health insurance.**

Maternity leave (starts 6 weeks before due date until 8 weeks after birth)

- You are **not allowed to work** anymore.
- Your full net salary is now covered by the **maternity leave allowance** (*Mutterschutzgeld*): normally paid by your health insurance and your employer.

Birth



Congratulations on the birth of your child (or your children)!



After birth

- ☐ **Apply for the birth certificate (*Geburtsbescheinigung*) of the child** (at the competent registry office *Standesamt*). Multiple copies of the birth certificate (*Geburtsurkunde*) will be made available to you (also international ones if you need) so you can arrange child benefit and health insurance for your child.
 - At the university, fathers get one additional day of holiday. On the *Urlaubsantrag*, tick the box for *Sonderurlaub* and add a copy of the birth certificate. **The *Urlaubsantrag* can be submitted retroactively.**
- ☐ **Register your child's place of residence at the registry office (*Einwohnermeldeamt*)**
- ☐ **Apply for family insurance for the child.**
- ☐ **Apply for child benefit ([Kindergeld](#))** at the office for families (*Familienkasse*)
- ☐ **Optionally apply for a passport for the child** – if you are non-German, see with your embassy which documents you need and where you can apply for a passport (it sometimes requires travelling to Berlin).
- ☐ **Apply for parental leave (*Elternzeit*).** This must be received by the employer seven weeks before the start of the parental leave. In principle, for mothers, it should be submitted within one week of the child's birth. The university is usually flexible with this but inform HR as early as possible. Note that it is also possible to take parental leave together for mother and father. For example, a father can take one month of parental leave (possibly with parental allowance), starting at birth, while the mother is still on maternity leave. There can also be an overlap of parental leave (possibly with parental allowance) before the mother goes back to work and the father starts his parental leave. We recommend informing your group leader / supervisor about your plans.
- ☐ **Register for a recovery course (*Rückbildungskurs*)** (costs covered by the health insurance).

Eight weeks after birth (twelve weeks after birth for premature and multiple births and / or if a disability is detected in the child)

- End of maternity leave, start of parental leave or possibility to return to work. In practice however, mothers usually go back to work at the earliest around 6 months after giving birth. Many Kitas and childminder will not accept children under the age of 1, although some will welcome younger babies. Culturally, it is common in Germany for mothers to stay one year at home to take care of their baby. However, programs are put in place to encourage parents to share parental leave in order to allow for a better distribution of care responsibilities. Women who want to go back to work earlier than one year after the birth will need to share parental leave with their partner/family until the child can start Kita / child minder or find a Kita / child minder who will accept a young baby (also keep in mind that in many Kitas, babies can start only in August).

Within the first three months after birth

- ☐ **Apply for parental allowance (*Elterngeld*).** You can submit it to the parental benefit agency (paid for only three months retroactively). The government has also introduced the *ElterngeldPlus* package with the aim to help parents who work part-time following the birth of their baby in Germany. This offers additional financial support options. For more info, you may have another read through the [very detailed leaflet](#) on *Elternzeit*, *Elterngeld* and *Elterngeldplus*. You may also look at the webpage [Elterngeld-digital](#) where you can find lots of information (in German). You can also always visit the office for parental allowance (*Elterngeldstelle*) to get some advice from professionals.

Some useful vocabulary

German	English
Einwohnermeldeamt	registry office for residence and IDs
Elterngeld	parental allowance
Elternzeit	parental leave
Entbindungstermin (Termin)	estimated date of delivery (due date)
Frauenarzt	Gynaecologist
Geburtsbescheinigung	birth certification
Geburtsurkunde	birth certificate
Hebamme	Midwife
Kindergeld	child benefit
Krankenkasse	health insurance company
Krankenversicherung	health insurance:
Mutterpass	mother's book
Mutterschaftsgeld	maternity allowance
Mutterschutz	maternity leave
Personaldezernat	Human Resources
Rückbildungskurs	recovery course
Schwangerschaftsvorbereitung	birth preparation course
Standesamt	registry office for certificates
Standesamt	registry office
Vaterschaftsanerkennung	paternity recognition

When and how to tell your supervisor / group leader about your pregnancy

It is your choice. Many women wait for the end of the first trimester (12 weeks) because after that the risk of a miscarriage is decreased considerably. If you suffer from physical discomfort, you may want to let your supervisor / group leader know to expect that you will be calling sick often and why. **If you work in the lab**, especially with hazardous substances, or **if you are planning to go on a cruise / field work**, you should talk to your supervisor / group leader early **in order to be protected**. Many regulations exist to protect pregnant women but they apply only if you have officially announced your pregnancy.

Basically, it is recommended to inform your supervisor / group leader early. But there is no compelling obligation to inform the employer about the pregnancy.

It is helpful to make an appointment for a personal interview. If you tell your supervisor / group leader about the pregnancy, you do not have to already discuss in details your plans for your parental leave. Nevertheless, it may be good to discuss parental leave and possibly part-time wishes with your partner beforehand and to have first wishes in mind.

After the conversation with your supervisor / group leader, it is advisable to inform your colleagues - especially if you are in a small team where maternity protection (e.g. no access to lab, no participation to cruises) may have a direct impact on your colleagues.

Incidentally, some pregnant women have the experience that they are asked intrusive questions, for example: "And? Was the pregnancy planned?". Since family planning is not a casual small-talk topic, it may be good to think in advance about a possible answer to indiscrete questions or to make it clear that you do not have to respond to them.

Where to give birth? Hospitals, birth-houses and home births

Women having a baby in Germany can choose to give birth in a hospital, birth-house or at home. **All the options are covered by health insurance.** Depending on where you live, you may have varying degrees of options available.

Hospitals and clinics are for those women who like the comfort of knowing everything is on the spot, to offer epidurals and deal with emergency services. From birthing balls and water births to more traditional ways of delivery, all options are available. The birth itself is handled by a midwife (usually not the same as the one following you during pregnancy) and doctors will step in should there be an emergency. If you want to be sure to know the midwife with whom you will give birth at the hospital, you may also choose to hire a *Beleghebamme*, who will follow you during pregnancy (covered by health insurance), birth (often at extra charge) and postnatal (covered by health insurance). Typical hospital stays last three nights, or five nights for C-sections (costs covered by health insurance). Many hospitals offer family rooms at an extra charge, where your partner can stay overnight. In case of an uncomplicated birth and healthy child and mother, you may also choose to do a so-called *ambulante Geburt*. In this case, you can leave the hospital after the baby had her/his first baby check by the paediatrician (*Erstuntersuchung für das Baby U1*), around 4 hours after birth. If you prefer an *ambulate Geburt*, you need to have checked **beforehand** that your paediatrician will be able to come to your place to do the second check (U2), 3 to 5 days after the birth.

Alternatively, you can seek out a specialised midwife to deliver your baby at home, in what is called a *Hausgeburt*. In case of an emergency, you will immediately be transferred to a hospital.

A "birth house" (*Geburtshaus*) is somewhere between the two options, providing a homely atmosphere managed by midwives. There are no emergency services on site, so in case of complications they will call an ambulance. You are usually expected to leave within a few hours after giving birth. As with the *ambulante Geburt* check that your paediatrician will be able to come to your place for the U2. If you choose to give birth in a *Geburtshaus*, you will be followed by the same midwife (or team of midwives) during pregnancy, birth and postnatal without extra costs.

Important: if you decide to give birth in a *Geburtshaus* or with a *Beleghebamme*, you should contact them very early (probably around 6 to 8 weeks pregnant, after the first appointment with the gynaecologist) to make sure they have time at your estimated date of delivery.

Childcare in Germany

In Germany, mandatory school starts at 6 years old. Before this, several options are available to take care of your child.

Nursery (*Kita*, *Kindertagesstätte*)

In a *Kita*, children are separated in 2 age groups:

- **Kinderkrippe** (creche): specifically designed for babies (starts around 6 months to 1 year depending on the nursery) and for children up to three years. It is not free and costs vary greatly. Generally, groups are made of 10 children with 2 to 3 educators. There is a 3 weeks acclimation period (*Eingewöhnung*) when the child starts *Kita* and during which the parent is required to be free (on holidays or parental leave).
- **Kindergarten**: Kindergarten (for children between 3 and 6 years) is not a part of the regular public-school system and is not mandatory. The main costs are now covered by the city of Bremen. However, some additional costs may still be required to be paid by the parents. Generally, it consists of groups of 20 children for 2 to 3 educators.

In Bremen, application for a Kita place is done in January. Parents are informed of the acceptance of the child in March. Most Kitas have all the children starting in August, but some offer flexibility in the starting time if they have free spaces.

There is a great variety of Kita structures. Some Kitas are public (generally cheap, six weeks of holidays during the year, often short opening hours), some are private (generally more expensive and sometimes with restrictions such as parents place of employment, often longer opening hours), some also require parental-involvement. In Bremen, many bilingual Kitas are found, e.g. German with French, English or Italian.

Be aware: many Kitas accept children only from the age of 1, and only starting in August. So, a child born in January may start only when she/he is 1.5 years!

Here are some links and websites. However, it is often best to talk around and get a feeling of what has worked or not for your colleagues and/or friends:

- [Childcare service for students](#)
- [Childcare facilities on campus](#)
- [Overview of Kitas in Bremen](#)

• **Childminder (*Tagesmutter*):** A childminder is usually one who works in his/her home, or who rents suitable venues for childcare. Depending on his/her qualification and the available venues, each childminder can assist up to 5 children. Childminders should have an official permission which certifies their qualification and the suitability of the venues. The minimum age at which a child can be accepted depends on the child minder, but it will generally be around 1 year old.

[This article](#) explains well the advantages and disadvantages of a childminder.

“A childminder might feel homely and warm-hearted because of the personal relationship with him/her, but parents should also be aware that this is a job and that childminders also go on holiday (whenever they want) for about 6 weeks in the year. Childminders do not require a substitute when they are sick, so you will need to find alternative solutions while they are away or sick.

On the other side, one of the advantages of hiring a childminder is that they are more likely to have free spots during the year, which is extremely difficult for a Kindergarten to have. The Kindergarten waiting lists close at the end of January and spots are assigned between February and April, however, the spot is only available starting from 1 August.”

Good to know: if you opt for a private or parent Kita, you may apply at the parent contribution office ([Elternbeitragsstelle](#)) to get benefits in case you pay more than the maximum amount. The sum you will be reimbursed depends on your income and your Kita costs (including how many children you have at the Kita).

Checklist for supervisor / group leaders

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Upon announcement of the pregnancy

- ☐ **Congratulate** the mother / father to-be! Expecting a child can be intimidating so be as supportive as possible.
- ☐ If employee is not aware of **this document**, **point it out**.
- ☐ If she has not done it, the next step for a pregnant woman is to **inform HR** ([Personaldezernat](#))
- ☐ If necessary, there may be some **adaptation of the activities and working conditions according to the Maternity Protection Act**; contact with [Referat 2 Arbeitsschutz- und Gesundheitsmanagement](#) to make sure to **provide a safe working environment**.
- ☐ You may point out the **University offers for support** (e.g. family office and the (de)central women's representative, MARUM office for equal opportunities etc...).

Approximately three months before maternity leave begins

- ☐ Meet with the mother or father to-be in order to **discuss and plan the period of Mutterschutz, Elternzeit and when to return to work**.
- ☐ In the case of fixed term contracts (PhD and postdocs), **discuss with HR about the possibility for contract extension** to make up for maternity and parental leave (*Nachholen von Zeiten*).
- ☐ Clarify the **possibilities of maintaining contact and general accessibility** during the time off work.

Before maternity leave (6 weeks before due date) or last working day

- ☐ Have a **final conversation before maternity / parental leave** and, if necessary, clarify open questions related to the time off work of your team member.

After the birth of the child

- ☐ A **congratulatory gesture**, e.g. a greeting card of the team, would certainly be welcome from the new parents.

During parental leave

- ☐ **Keep in touch!**
- ☐ Ask about **changes in planned return-to-work date**.

Around 2 months before the parental leave expires

- ☐ **Discuss and plan the details about return-to-work**, for example on the extent of weekly working time, daily working hours, any other open questions on the return of you team member (participation in cruises or field work...).