



THE FEDERATION OF  
MOTHER AND  
CHILD HOMES  
AND SHELTERS

SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES

WHO HAVE MOVED

TO FINLAND

Pregnancy,  
birth and your  
baby in Finland





# Congratulations, you're having a baby!

Pregnancy and the birth of a baby is a big event that changes your life and involves a lot of different emotions. You may feel insecure in your new situation, even if you are mostly happy about the birth of your baby.

Adapting to a new country and culture takes effort and can make it difficult to parent a baby. In addition to being a parent, you also have to learn a new language, customs and way of life, and you may not know people in the new country who you can turn to if you have any questions or need help. The customs and practices in Finland related to pregnancy, birth and bringing up a baby may be different from what you are used to. You may not know what kind of help is available and where to find it.

This booklet has been written to support people who have moved to Finland from another country. It is divided into two parts. The first part offers factual information about practices and support that is available to you during pregnancy, birth and babyhood. The second part contains information and support for parents who have moved to Finland because of a traumatic experience, such as war.

We hope you will find the information in this booklet useful, that it will support you during your pregnancy and after your baby is born, and that it will help you to understand your feelings. The booklet also contains information on when and where to seek professional support. We especially hope you will be able to enjoy your new situation and that you and your baby will both be happy in each other's company.



# Pregnancy

## Getting to know your baby during pregnancy

During pregnancy, parents often wonder what their baby will be like, what their baby will look like, what it will be like to be a parent and what living with a baby will involve. You can get to know your baby during pregnancy by talking or singing to them and stroking your bump. This will help you to form a bond with your baby, and after your baby is born, it will be easier for you to recognise the things that they like, when they are hungry and when they need a cuddle and want to be near you. This will make your baby feel safe. When your baby grows up, they will be able to cope with different emotions and situations. The care and closeness that your baby experiences from you will help them to cope with difficult situations later in life.

## Support for families during pregnancy

In Finland, pregnancy is monitored at maternity and child health clinics. Maternity and child health clinic is a general term for health care services that focus on monitoring the health and development of unborn children and children under school age (1–6 years old) and their families. The clinic will support you during pregnancy and offer help on parenting and interacting with your baby, as well as guidance on caring for your baby.

### The maternity and child health clinic:

- Monitors your health and pregnancy
- Monitors the growth and well-being of your baby
- Offers guidance on healthy living
- Offers support for parenting and your relationship
- Offers support in preparing for labour
- Is a place where you can talk about your concerns and that offers you support and assistance if you need it



The maternity clinic will provide you with a health clinic card, which will contain all the information about your health and pregnancy. Bring this card with you every time you visit the clinic and when you go to hospital to give birth. You will have about 10 appointments at the clinic during your pregnancy, two of which are with a doctor. If the clinic has any concerns about your or your baby's health, you will be offered additional appointments. Appointments at a maternity and child health clinic are free, and you can bring your partner, friend or someone else to support you. You have the right to have an interpreter at your appointment at the maternity and child health clinic if you and the public health nurse do not have a language that you both speak fluently. If necessary, the interpreter can take part remotely.

In Finland, pregnant women are offered the opportunity to undergo an ultrasound examination to screen for any aberrations related to the baby's growth and development. The examination is carried out in a maternity hospital or private health care clinic. The public health nurse at the maternity and child health clinic will be able to tell you whether you will receive a letter inviting you to an appointment or be contacted by phone.

If there are any concerns about your pregnancy, the maternity and child health clinic will refer you to a maternity outpatient clinic in the maternity hospital for further examination and treatment. The reason may be an underlying disease that you have or another concern such as an increase in your blood pressure or reasons related to the baby's size (the baby being too big or small). The maternity outpatient clinic can also monitor your pregnancy if you have had problems with a previous pregnancy or labour. If so, please mention these to the nurse at the maternity and child health clinic.

You can have an interpreter at your ultrasound examination and appointments at the maternity outpatient clinic if you require one. Tell the nurse at the maternity and child health clinic if you have any fears or concerns about the labour. The maternity outpatient clinic can offer you support if you have any fears, and you can also talk to a doctor about your options for giving birth.

If you have any concerns about your pregnancy or your baby's health, you can always contact the maternity and child health clinic or the maternity hospital's emergency clinic.

## Important contact details

My maternity and child health clinic:

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My maternity outpatient clinic:

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My maternity hospital's emergency clinic:

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Other important telephone numbers:

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## Getting ready

It is a good idea to prepare for the birth of your baby by having some of the most important supplies ready. The smaller the baby, the fewer things they need. In Finland, undamaged, usable second-hand baby supplies can easily be bought from flea markets or Facebook's flea markets. You can also obtain things you need from a reception centre as well as some organisations. Social services can help you with purchases for your baby under certain circumstances.

### A baby needs:

- A clean and safe place to sleep
- A pram or other means of transport
- Nappies and gauzes
- Vitamin D given according to instructions; your child health clinic will offer advice on basic medicines for your baby
- Clothes; it is easy to find recycled clothes or obtain them free
- Breastfeeding aids if required, or bottles for bottle feeding and baby formula
- A baby car seat if you drive; these can be hired or borrowed (e.g. from reception centres)
- You should buy other supplies and toys only as you need them



Arrange for someone to look after your older children, if any, while you are in hospital giving birth. Could a relative or friend look after them? You can also hire a babysitter if no one else is available, and social workers will provide a place of care or a babysitter for your home if you have no other options. You can also contact the Federation of Mother and Child Homes and Shelters for help. The Federation's contact details can be found on the back of this booklet.

Most parents are concerned about their finances. There is a fixed fee for staying in hospital to give birth to your baby, i.e. the hospital's daily fee, which is about EUR 40–50/day. You do not need to pay for any other procedures related to giving birth, such as a possible caesarean section (C-section). If someone stays overnight at the maternity hospital to support you, they will also be charged the fee. Appointments at the maternity outpatient clinic are also subject to a fee. Antenatal care and birth are free for asylum seekers and others in a similar situation (temporary protection); others need to pay a fee, but it may be possible to receive support from social services.

The financial support available depends on the immigration status. More information is available on the Finnish Immigration Service website ([www.migri.fi](http://www.migri.fi)). You can also find more information about support available to you at your reception centre, social services and Kela ([www.kela.fi](http://www.kela.fi)).



Giving birth

## Preparing for labour and birth

Giving birth is an exciting experience, but it can also be a frightening one. You may be worried if you are far away from your loved ones, you do not have a common language with the staff or you are not quite sure how things work in Finland. Giving birth is safe here, and during labour you will be accompanied by skilled healthcare professionals who want the best for you and your baby. To ease your worries, you could think about what kind of things would make you feel good and safe during labour: you can wear your own clothes, the lighting can be adjusted in most delivery rooms, you can listen to music or walk around. Tell the staff about your wishes when you go to the hospital.

You can get help for your fears related to giving birth during your pregnancy. If you have been subjected to violence, these experiences may come to your mind when you prepare for labour and birth. You can safely talk about all your concerns at the maternity and child health clinic or the maternity outpatient clinic. We also encourage you to talk about circumcision and other issues that concern you during your first appointments at the clinic.

You can have someone to support you during labour. This person may be your partner, relative, friend or someone else you feel safe with. You can choose to stay in touch with your loved ones via phone/Skype/WhatsApp during labour, and you can also be accompanied by a volunteer or professional support person (doula). Their job is to be there for you throughout your labour. A doula will usually meet you during pregnancy so that you can get to know each other. You can also discuss your wishes regarding birth and pain relief with the doula.

A volunteer doula's fee is about EUR 50. The mother pays the doula's fee, though in some cases social services may provide a voucher towards the fee. Those on a low income may have access to a doula free of charge with a separate agreement.

*Read more about the doula activities of the Federation of Mother and Child Homes and Shelters here: Voluntary doulas – supporting parents-to-be by the Federation of Mother and Child Homes and Shelters*

*Folkhälsan also has volunteer doulas (in Finnish and Swedish):  
Tukea perheenlisäystä odottavalle – Folkhälsan (folkhalsan.fi)*

## What do you need to bring to the maternity hospital?

Pack the items that you need to bring to the hospital as your due date approaches and have the telephone number of a taxi company at hand. You should bring at least these things:

- Maternity card
- Kela card/ID card/passport/or a card provided by the reception centre
- Cash/debit card
- Clothes for the baby to wear for the journey home (including a hat, blanket or a thick sleepsuit if the weather is cold). Your baby will be given everything they need at the hospital, including baby formula if necessary
- A baby car seat for transport (you can borrow one from the reception centre, for example, in advance)
- Toiletries for yourself (toothbrush, deodorant, etc.)
- Nursing bra, pads
- Mobile phone and a charger
- Clothes for yourself to wear for the journey home. When you are in the hospital, you will be given a nightgown, pants and sanitary pads.
- If you have an underlying medical condition, such as asthma or diabetes, bring the medicines that you need to treat it. You will be given painkillers and other medicines that you need during and after labour at the hospital.
- You will be given food, but you may bring snacks for yourself.

## When is it time to go to the maternity hospital?

In Finland, you give birth in a hospital. It is a good idea to call the hospital if you think that your labour has started and you have contractions that last for about a minute, are regular and start coming at a shorter interval, your waters break or you have other worrying symptoms such as heavy bleeding, you cannot feel your baby moving or the amniotic fluid is green.

The due date is an estimate of when your baby will be born. Most babies are born between two weeks before and two weeks after their due date. An induced labour will be considered when your baby is overdue by about two weeks, taking into account your and your baby's health.

You can usually go to the hospital by taxi or car. You will need to pay for the taxi yourself, but we advise you to keep all receipts for possible reimbursement. An ambulance is seldom needed. An interpreter is usually not available for childbirth, but an interpreter can be contacted by phone when you go into labour if necessary so that you can discuss matters with the staff.

## Giving birth at hospital

In Finland, births are overseen by a midwife, a healthcare professional who specialises in pregnancies and births. The midwife's job is to make sure that you and your baby are well during labour, and they monitor elements such as the progress of labour, your baby's heartbeat and your well-being. The midwife will consult an obstetrician if necessary. There will also be a paediatrician at the hospital, and the staff will be able to help you with any problems. Midwives often have several births to attend to, so they will not be in your room all the time. There will not be any other women in labour in the delivery room with you. A student midwife may also be present, but you have the right to refuse the presence of students.

## Stages of labour and birth and pain relief

There are different stages of labour and the duration varies. The average labour lasts 12–24 hours for a first birth. In the first stage, contractions will cause your cervix to open and your baby will move down the birth canal. The contractions are a hardening and tightening feeling across your stomach, and the pain often radiates to the back, thighs and buttocks. In the second stage, the baby will move further down the birth canal, which may feel like you need to poo and you will get an urge to push. The midwife will guide you to push and help you with the delivery of your baby. After the birth of your baby, you will deliver the placenta, and any tears will be sewn. You can ask for pain relief at any stage of labour.

The midwife will advise you on pain relief. Once you are in labour, you can try breathing slowly, walking, taking a warm shower or changing positions to make you feel comfortable. You can change positions and often also move about during the different stages of labour. Pain is a natural part of giving birth, but there is no need to endure severe pain. You will be given pain relief if necessary. Gas and air as well as an epidural are examples of pain relief options that are available in all hospitals in Finland.

Tell the midwife if any position, procedure or other issue feels difficult so that you can find another way to deal with the situation. Taking slow, deep breaths, focusing on the soles of your feet or sucking on an ice cube, for example, can help you to maintain a sense of control.

If there are any changes in your or your baby's condition, a doctor will assess how the delivery should be handled. A suction cup can be used to help deliver your baby if necessary. It is a small plastic cup attached to the baby's head by suction when you push, and it allows the doctor to gently pull the baby out as you push.

A baby may be delivered by C-section, i.e. a surgical procedure, instead of vaginally. A C-section may be planned in advance together with the staff for medical reasons, such as the mother's illness. Sometimes the staff decides on a C-section during labour if this is necessary due to the baby's or mother's health.

Doula coordinator's contact details:

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Taxi telephone number:

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Medical helpline:

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Contact details of the person caring for the other siblings/  
children during the hospital stay:

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The emergency number is 112

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## After the birth

After your baby is born, they will be placed on your chest for skin-to-skin contact and the umbilical cord will be cut. Skin-to-skin contact helps calm both you and your baby after the birth and speeds up their adaptation to living outside the womb.

You can get to know each other and try breastfeeding for the first time. You can also take pictures to send to the other parent and other loved ones. The midwife will measure and weigh the baby before you move to the maternity ward. Babies are not always washed after the birth, but you can tell the midwife if you want your baby to be washed before they are lifted into your arms.

You will move from the delivery room to the maternity ward after a few hours. Before you move to the ward, the midwife will press your stomach to check that your uterus is well contracted and there is no heavy bleeding. You will also be asked to urinate before you go to the ward. You will be given food and drink and will have an opportunity to shower.

It is common to share a room with other mothers with babies in the maternity ward. Sometimes it may be possible to have a family room so that your partner or someone else supporting you can also stay at the hospital overnight.

You will be shown how to care for your baby, how to breastfeed and how to wash your baby and change their nappies. Midwives will monitor your baby's health by checking their weight, urination and breastfeeding. They will also make sure that you begin to recover from the childbirth. Before you are discharged from the hospital, a paediatrician will check your baby is healthy; meanwhile your health will be checked by the midwife.

It is common to stay in hospital for 1–2 days. You may need to stay longer if you have given birth by C-section or your baby needs monitoring due to blood sugar fluctuations, for example. It is quite common for a baby's skin to turn yellow, which can be treated with a phototherapy device: a warm changing table with a blue lamp on top. During treatment, the baby's eyes are covered while they lie under the light wearing just a nappy. The treatment is painless and safe, but your baby may experience distress and cry due to being separated from you. You can stroke, talk to and sing to your baby during the treatment and also hold and breastfeed them as usual. If your baby is well, they will remain in the same room as you throughout your hospital stay, including during phototherapy.

There is also a paediatric ward in the hospital where babies can be taken if they require additional treatment or continuous monitoring. This could be necessary, for example, if your baby is having difficulty breathing. While this may seem frightening, most problems that arise after the birth can be resolved quickly with the right treatment. Care for newborn babies is particularly good in Finland, and skilled staff will take good care of your baby. If your baby is in the paediatric ward, you will be able to visit them there several times a day.

## Breastfeeding

In Finland, mothers are encouraged to breastfeed their babies. Breast milk is the best food for your baby and contains nutrients that your baby needs. Breastfeeding also helps you to recover from childbirth. It is the easiest, most hygienic and most affordable way to feed your baby. Breastfeeding strengthens the intimate bond between you and your baby. The recommendation in Finland is to breastfeed your baby up to the age of six months, after which you can continue to breastfeed them with supplementation until the age of one year. You can continue breastfeeding for as long as it feels comfortable for you and your baby.

Sometimes breastfeeding is more difficult than the mother might hope: babies can have trouble suckling or the mother may not have enough milk or experience pain when breastfeeding. If you have any problems breastfeeding, please ask the hospital or the maternity and child health clinic for help. If it is still not possible to breastfeed your baby, they will be given baby formula from a bottle. We recommend that you try breastfeeding, but you also need to remember not to demand too much of yourself amidst the many changes that occur during this time. The most important thing for your baby is having a parent who can cope; they do not care if they are fed breast milk or baby formula. If breastfeeding is a stressful experience for you, bottle feeding may be a better option.

*More information and support regarding breastfeeding:  
Finnish Association for Breastfeeding Support (imetys.fi)*



## Babyhood

## The first days with your baby

When you leave the hospital with your baby, you may be nervous about how you will cope with your baby and your daily life. It is normal to feel insecure about caring for your baby, especially if you do not have anyone to support you. However, babies usually bring a lot of joy to their mothers, and you will get used to caring for your baby as you get to know them better every day.

You will learn to recognise what your baby needs from their voice, movements, gestures and facial expressions – if they want milk, their nappy needs to be changed, they are hot or gassy, they want to be cuddled or if they are tired. Your baby will also learn that you are there for them in difficult situations, to feed and comfort them and to change their nappy. Even small babies can interact with other people, and your baby will turn their head in your direction when you talk, try to respond to your facial expressions and later babble in response to you. Babies like routines because they make them feel safe.

## Relaxing your mind and body

Caring for a baby is often rewarding and meaningful, but it is also demanding; your small baby needs you to survive and has not yet developed a regular sleeping pattern. Recovering from the birth and breastfeeding puts strain on the body and mind, and you will need to rest more than usual. You may also notice that you need care and support from another adult, and this may feel especially good.

Your baby can sense if you are tense or stressed, so try to calm your body and mind; breathing exercises, calming music and gentle stretching can help you relax. Daily routines, such as meals and outdoor activities, and making sure that you get enough sleep will help you recover from the birth and cope with caring for your baby. Routines are good for you and your baby. Your baby lives in the here and now, and skin-to-skin contact, regular care and their mother's presence will make them feel safe.

Playing and having fun together can help you forget your worries momentarily. Songs and fairy tales from your own childhood can be very comforting. You can tell your baby about absent loved ones from a young age. Even very young children like to look at photos of relatives and their home country, if that is something that makes you feel good. You should talk to your baby, even if

they do not understand everything yet. It creates a bond and helps your baby to learn to speak and to recognise different things as well as their own feelings. It is a good idea to speak to your baby in your native language because it is the language you use for expressing your emotions. If you stay in Finland permanently, your child will learn Finnish later in day care and at school.

### Ways to calm yourself down:

- Talk about your concerns to your partner, a friend or a professional.
- Do things that give you joy and happiness.
- Help your mind and body to calm down by exercising or listening to music, for example.
- Maintain a regular routine. Make sure you get rest, involve yourself in outdoor activities and eat nutritious food.
- Control your breathing by slowly inhaling and exhaling.
- Use touch and massage to help – you can rub your arms, pat your chest and try out what feels good to you.
- Sense different temperatures – drink a glass of cold water or a cup of hot tea.
- Try nice scents or perfumes – babies smell good, smelling your baby is a soothing experience for both of you.
- Enjoy comfort food or drinks.
- Sucking also soothes adults. Try drinking with a straw or sucking a mint or a lollipop.
- Take care of yourself!
- Remind yourself that a given moment will pass.
- Seek help – timely support prevents further difficulties.

*MIELI Crisis Helpline (in five languages): MIELI Crisis Helpline in English*

*Read more about well-being and tips for relaxing:*

*Serenen materiaalit/Serene Resources ([mielenterveysseurat.fi](http://mielenterveysseurat.fi))*

## Monitoring your baby's health and well-being

Your baby will continue to attend the maternity and child health clinic. At first, a nurse will visit your home and then you will see the nurse regularly at the clinic. The purpose of the appointments is to monitor the growth and development of your baby as well as to offer advice and guidance on childcare. Your baby's height and weight will be measured, and they will be given the necessary vaccinations to protect them from various diseases. A doctor or midwife will check your health and the condition of your reproductive organs a few weeks after childbirth in a follow-up appointment.

If your baby is unwell, unable to eat or lethargic, or if you have any other concerns about your baby's health, contact the health station or the hospital emergency department, or, if your baby is under two weeks old, contact the maternity hospital. The smaller your baby is, the more important it is to get professional help if you have any concerns.

## Soothing a crying baby

It is normal for your baby to cry, shout and whine. Making noises is your baby's way of expressing needs and emotions, as well as interacting with their surroundings. Sometimes your baby will cry almost non-stop, no matter how much you cuddle or care for them. This does not mean that you are a bad parent or that you do not know how to care for your baby. It is important to remember that babies do not cry to torment or annoy their parents but to communicate that they are not feeling well and need help. Your baby will calm down when they know you are near, they can feel your touch and hear your soothing voice.

### Soothing aids for a crying baby:

- Skin-to-skin contact, cuddling, gentle patting
- Familiar voices, talking, singing
- Familiar rhythm, movement
- An adult's breathing and heartbeat
- Familiar scents and flavours, the mother's smell
- Breast milk and suckling

If your baby is healthy but cries constantly during the first few months and is difficult to calm down, they may have colic. The exact cause of colic is unknown, but it may be related to the baby's rapid growth and development. It may be difficult to recognise colic from the way your baby cries, but colicky babies cry more in the evenings, are active, restless and irritable. They may not want to be cuddled, and the usual methods to calm them down do not make them feel better. Parents may find this difficult to deal with but, fortunately, colic usually stops by the time babies are three months old.

If you cannot cope with your baby crying, put them in a safe place and go into another room for a few minutes to calm down. Do not leave your baby alone for an extended period of time. If you cannot calm yourself down, ask someone to help you so you can take a break or get some rest. Ask a relative or a friend to help you or talk about the issue at the maternity and child health clinic. The clinic will be able to arrange for someone to come and help you with childcare and household chores.

## Postpartum depression

Depression during pregnancy and after the birth is relatively common. Having a baby is associated with a wide range of emotions and hormonal changes that increase the risk of postpartum depression. It is good to be aware that if you have had difficult experiences in the past or are in a difficult situation now, it may increase your risk of depression or make parenting feel particularly challenging. Postpartum depression is not the same as ordinary feelings of tiredness. It manifests itself in different ways: you might find that you are constantly tired and irritable and sleeping does not make you feel better, or that you struggle to get much sleep, for example. You may be unable to take care of yourself or to feel happy about anything, even the company of your baby. You may be uncertain about your ability to be a mother, or you may be overprotective of your baby. Daily chores can feel especially challenging. These feelings can be vague and arise in different combinations. They can occur during pregnancy, immediately after childbirth or sometime later. You are not a bad parent if you have these feelings.



If you have these feelings often or continuously, it is important that you to talk about it at the maternity and child health clinic. You will be given support to discuss your feelings or experiences and you can also receive help at home, peer support or medication if necessary. Ask for help as soon as you feel that you can no longer cope. You do not need to worry about having your baby taken away from you if you tell someone about your depression. A child cannot be taken into care just because their mother finds it difficult to cope.

*Read more about postpartum depression and the support that is available:  
Information and peer support – mothers and pregnant women with  
depression (aima.fi)*


## Make contacts outside the home

Many people think that it is important to share their experiences with others in the same situation. When you have a baby, it is especially important to see other adults. You can meet other immigrants, go to playgrounds or visit baby-friendly cafés. Reception centres often offer various peer group activities for families with children. You can make new friends through peer groups and get tips both on living with a baby and on living in a new country.

Prepare for life with your baby. Do you know anyone who you can ask for help in case you get sick or are particularly exhausted? For example, do you have a neighbour you can turn to if you need help? In Finland, various authorities and volunteer, non-governmental organisations can also help you.

If possible, keep in touch with your family and friends in your home country and elsewhere. You can send each other voice messages and videos that you and your baby can listen to and watch together. You can also write down notes about your baby's growth and development to share with them or just for yourself for the future. If your partner cannot be contacted or is dead, you can share your memories of the other parent with your baby.

*Read more about pregnancy, childbirth and babyhood in English,  
Arabic, Persian and Somali:  
OTHER LANGUAGES | Perheinfo / Tampereen korkeakouluyhteisö (tuni.fi)*



For parents who  
have fled to Finland  
to escape war or  
conflict

Pregnancy and the birth of a baby always evoke a wide range of emotions. If you have lived amidst a war or conflict and had to flee to Finland as a result – possibly without your child's other parent, your other children or even your whole family – it is natural for such difficult experiences to make it especially challenging for you to cope and maintain your mental well-being and to enjoy and focus on being a parent.

## Difficult experiences and their potential effects on parenting

You may have experienced very frightening and distressing situations because of war or conflict. You may have fears, nightmares, fatigue, stress, anxiety and unexplained pains; you may suffer from loss of appetite, or have a desire to be alone or a fear of being left alone. You may also be worried about your loved ones who are still in a war zone or other difficult circumstances. You may not have a support network of friends and relatives in your new country and perhaps you feel lonely. The Finnish service system can be difficult to understand, and you may not know where to get help or even that help is available. Uncertainty about money and the future can be worrying as well. You will also have to learn a new language and adapt to new customs in the new country.

It is understandable that you may think and talk about your difficult past experiences a lot. Alternatively, you may feel that talking or even thinking about difficult things is too distressing and you try to ignore them as much as you can. Either way, it can be very tiring for you. We advise you to think about ways to calm yourself down and to cope with everyday life so that you can be a safe and resilient parent for your baby. It is also a good idea to talk about these issues at the maternity and child health clinic so that you can get help in time.

Coming from a war zone, you may have concerns about your own and your baby's health, the future might worry you and you may relive past experiences. Childbirth can evoke a sense of threat or fear in you, and your baby crying can bring back memories of difficult experiences. Feeling like this can make it difficult for you to bond with your baby, comfort them and consider their needs. Perhaps your baby does not bring you joy, and you may even have negative thoughts about them. You may find it difficult to be away from your baby, leave

them with other people and trust that nothing bad happens; or you may feel like you need more time alone without your baby. Expecting a baby without your partner or other members of your family can feel particularly difficult and make you feel lonely, sad and disappointed. Uncertainty about your partner's situation or the future of your family can amplify these feelings. Happy feelings can even make you feel guilty.

Despite all the events and concerns mentioned above, you and your baby have every chance of a good and balanced life. Read on to see what you can do to make your everyday life easier.

## What might help you?

Sometimes it can be difficult to tell which emotions derive from war experiences and which are normal mood swings or fatigue related to pregnancy or living with a small baby. You may be worried about your ability to offer your child a safe and happy future and how your mood, experiences and uncertain situation affect your baby's well-being. However, you are allowed to be happy about your baby and focus on nurturing them and learning to be a parent. This is the most important thing you can do right now.

There are reliable professionals in Finland with whom you can talk openly about your feelings during pregnancy, and you can get support to cope with difficult experiences if necessary. The maternity and child health clinic is one of the places where you can bring up all your concerns about your baby and yourself. Tell the clinic staff if you have strong fears about your own or your baby's health and well-being, feelings of anger or bitterness towards your baby, or anxiety, pain, insomnia, intrusive thoughts or feelings of hopelessness. There is a wide range of support services and activities available in Finland aimed at supporting parents' and children's well-being and teaching them to cope together.

Seeking help is good parenting and a sign of your desire to create the best possible life for your baby. The staff in the services also want the best for you and your baby. By seeking help, you will help yourself and your baby.

You are the best possible parent and the most important person for your baby. After all, your baby needs very little: nourishment, sleep, warmth, security and love. You and your baby are safe in Finland, and you will receive many kinds

of help and support when you need it. Talking about your worries, taking care of yourself and seeking help when you need it are also important for your baby's well-being. Talking to your baby, admiring them and holding them close will also make you feel good. It is good if you can focus on the present moment, enjoying your baby and being with them instead of thinking about your difficult past and uncertain future.

The Federation of Mother and Child Homes and Shelters supports all families regardless of their background, gender, age, culture, religion and sexual orientation. Help is available when families are exhausted, there is violence, it is difficult to cope with a baby, parents with or expecting a baby abuse drugs, parenting is challenging or parents divorce.

Your baby and doing what is best for them can also help you cope with your worries and grief.

Our member associations offer support that is quick and easy to access as well as intensive round-the-clock rehabilitation. Please contact our service team.

Our contact details can be found on the back of this booklet.

Talk to the professionals at the maternity and child health clinic about your problems or contact your local Federation of Mother and Child Homes and Shelters association directly.

#### WE CAN HELP:

**THE VAUVAPERHE.FI CHAT:** professionals from our associations offer help and guide you to a face-to-face support service

**A BABY BLUES** employee can help you to analyse your emotions and thoughts related to pregnancy. Free support is available by phone and face to face. A volunteer doula coordinator will find you a volunteer doula to assist you with the birth.

**A DAY GROUP** (päiväryhmä) provides support during the pregnancy and helps you to prepare for the baby's arrival together with other parents and professionals. You can join groups for families with babies also during your pregnancy.

**THE HOME-LIKE COMMUNITY IN A MOTHER AND CHILD HOME** (ensikoti) welcomes you also during your pregnancy.

**THE HOLDING TIGHT (PIDÄ KIINNI) HOMES FOR MOTHERS AND CHILDREN AND OPEN SERVICES** are aimed at families who need support to stay drug free during pregnancy and after childbirth.

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**THE SHELTERS AND OPEN SERVICES TO PREVENT VIOLENCE** (Turvakodit ja väkivaltatyön avopalvelut) help people when there is violence or a threat of violence in a relationship.

There is a service that offers help in case of **A SEPARATION OR DIVORCE IN THE FAMILY** (Ero lapsiperheessä).

[www.vauvaperhe.fi](http://www.vauvaperhe.fi)  
[www.apuaeroon.fi](http://www.apuaeroon.fi)  
[www.nettiturvakoti.fi](http://www.nettiturvakoti.fi)

