

maternity **and** health



the pregnancy:
*a new stage
in the life*



GENERALITAT VALENCIANA
CONSELLERIA DE SANITAT

maternityandhealth 

pregnancy:
*a new stage in
the life*

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Coordinated by:
Servici de Salut Infantil i de la Dona. (Health Service for Children and Women)
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Advisory Committee:
Carregui Vilar, Soledad. Midwife. Hospital de La Plana (Vila-Real).
Fraile Zamarreño, Amparo. Midwife. C.S. Moncada.
González Rodríguez, Milagrosa. Midwife. Hospital de Elche.
Martínez Molla, Teresa. Midwife. CS Hospital Provincial-Pla de Alicante.
Nohales Alfonso, Francisco. Obstetrician. Hospital Francesc de Borja (Gandía).
Perales Marín, Alfredo. Obstetrician. Hospital Maternal La Fe (Valencia).
Romeu Sarrió, Alberto. Gynaecologist. Valencian Society of Obstetrics and Gynaecology.
Tejedor Tornero, Ángeles. Midwife. C.S. Xàtiva.

Translation: *Lynne Alison Hunt*

Editorial Committee:
Elena Muñecas Escribà
Rosa Mas Pons
M^a Luisa Carpio Gesta
Carmen Barona Vilar

Graphic Design by:
Diego Mir.

Photography by:
Lorena Perales

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*In the mother's womb, life was of infinite richness,
Apart from noises and sounds, for the child everything was in
constant motion.*

*It could be that the mother stands up and walks,
that she turns around, crouches down
or that she stands on her tiptoes,
washes the vegetables or sweeps up...*

*Each thing is a wave,
each thing is a sensation for the child.
And even if the mother rests,
even if she picks up a book and sits down,
or lies down and goes to sleep,
this does not mean her breathing stops,
the gentle ebb and flow of which
continues to rock the baby.*

Frédéric Leboyer (SHANTALA)

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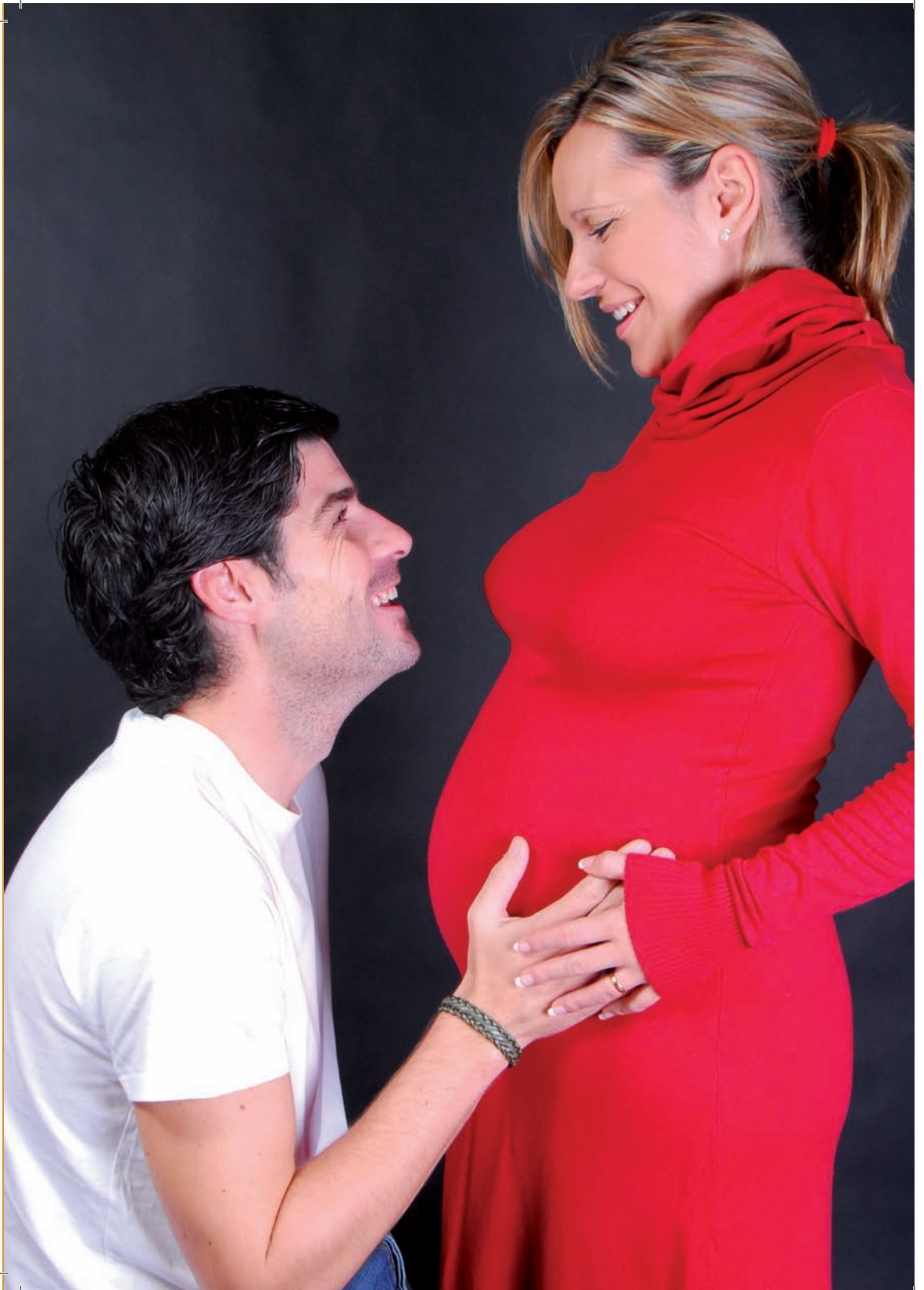
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we are going to be parents

The adventure of being parents will no doubt be a unique and rewarding experience bringing new challenges to both your lives. All pregnancies, even if this is not your first child, denote the beginning of a new stage in your lives, full of changes which you can share with those close to you.

It is a good idea to have available any relevant information about aspects such as the normal changes you can expect during pregnancy, healthy habits and behaviours or your rights at work. Health Professionals can be an excellent source of help during this period. Being well-informed will allow you to remain actively involved in any decision-making throughout the pregnancy, which will in turn help you to experience the birth of your child in a much more personally satisfying way.

changes during
pregnancy



Over the next few months you will experience a series of changes, both physical and psychological, which are normal during pregnancy and which will affect your body, your emotions and your family and social life. Each woman will experience these changes differently, even if she is already a mother, because each new pregnancy can be different from the last.

Knowing what these changes are likely to be and understanding why they happen can help you to stop worrying and to experience your pregnancy in a calmer and more informed way.

The first symptoms

Normally the first sign that you may be pregnant is a lack of menstruation. If you are familiar with your menstrual cycle and know when your period is due, it will be easier to realise that you are 'late', but this is not a definitive symptom because it is possible to suffer from delays in your cycle due to other reasons (illness, stress, etc.).

Some woman may have other early signs of pregnancy. The most frequent ones are:

- A feeling of having swollen or sensitive breasts.
- Slight pain in the lower part of the abdomen as if you were about to start your period.
- Increase in vaginal discharge.
- Nausea or vomiting.

You won't necessarily feel any of these symptoms; most women only experience the lack of menstruation. Go to your local health centre a few days after your missed period and they can check if you are pregnant with a simple urine test. The sooner you know you are pregnant, the sooner you can begin to look after yourself and your baby.

Physical changes

Hormonal changes and the increase in size of the uterus will be the cause of many of the symptoms which accompany your pregnancy.

It is normal that during the first few months you will feel more tired than usual and will need to get more rest.

Digestive problems during the first trimester of pregnancy, such as nausea or vomiting, are due to hormonal changes. They can be alleviated by eating smaller meals more often. It may also help if you start each meal with a starchy food type (potatoes, grains or pulses), for example a slice of toast. Take note of which foods affect you badly and avoid them.

You may also notice that you feel dizzy when you have been standing for a long period, or when you change position quickly, for example when you stand up from crouching, sitting or lying down.

Try not to stand still for too long, instead walk around or sit down.

This type of dizziness is due to the fact that your blood pressure is slightly lower during the first few months of pregnancy and these actions lower it even more.

In the second half of the pregnancy you may notice your abdomen

tightening. This is when the womb contracts, getting ready for labour. It is also usual to feel sharp pains or light to moderate pulls above your pubis and to your sides when you walk or change position due to the stretching of ligaments which have softened due to the pregnancy.



Around week 18 to 20, or even before if this is not your first pregnancy, you may feel your baby's movements. You might not notice them or realise that it is the baby moving at first, as it happens infrequently. But little by little you will notice these movements more each day. This is a sign that your baby is ok.

You may get cramps in your legs, especially at night. You can avoid this by massaging or stretching your legs, circling your feet or having a warm bath before going to bed, all of

which will relax your muscles. When you get a cramp, stretch your leg and flex your foot upwards. You can also relax the muscle by giving yourself a gentle massage, or by heating it with a warm towel or hot water bottle.

Your vagina will become more elastic and the quantity of vaginal discharge will increase. This happens as your body is preparing itself for the birth. It is a normal symptom as long as there is no itching or discomfort and the discharge does not smell bad or change colour.



As the pregnancy develops and the size of your uterus expands, **other uncomfortable symptoms** may appear. For example:

Backache: this may be caused by excess curvature of the back. To relieve it, try not to stand with your spine arched backwards, keep your back as straight as you can, rest more often and be careful to keep a good posture in all of the activities you do.

Swollen legs: this is due to the retention of liquids and the increased difficulty of venous return (flow of blood back to heart). Lie down whenever you can, keep your legs raised and do circling exercises with your ankles, moving your feet first in one direction then in the other. (You can also do this when you are not lying down).

Indigestion and heartburn: due to the uterus pressing on the stomach. To avoid these try to have smaller meals more often, always monitoring your total daily consumption, and avoid lying down immediately after eating.

More frequent need to urinate and constipation: due to the uterus pressing on the bladder, you may feel the need to urinate more frequently. The onset of constipation and even haemorrhoids may be related to the slowing down of the intestinal transit. To prevent these, increase the amount of fibre rich foods in your diet, drink at least a litre and a half of water a day and exercise regularly.

Your breasts will increase in size because they are getting prepared for breastfeeding, and it is probable that they will be more sensitive and that the veins will be more visible.

Like other parts of your body, your areola and nipples may grow darker in colour.

During pregnancy the tendency for dark patches to appear on your skin increases, but these will usually disappear after you give birth.

Moisturize your skin and avoid direct sunlight on your face. You could use moisturising facial creams with sun protection already in them. You may notice a dark line appearing on your stomach from your navel downwards.

Your gums may become more sensitive, or they may become swollen and even bleed. Make sure you take extra care with your oral hygiene. Brush your teeth after every meal with a soft-bristled toothbrush. It is a good idea for you have at least one appointment with your dentist or dental hygienist during your pregnancy.

Emotional changes

You are also likely to experience frequent changes in your feelings and in your moods because of the transformations that are about to affect your life with the coming birth of your son or daughter. Not all women will feel the same way, and all pregnancies are different; even the same woman may experience very different pregnancies each time. How

you feel depends on your personality, your circumstances and the resources and support you have available at each moment.

You may develop ambivalent feelings. If you were trying for this pregnancy, your happiness about the future arrival of your baby may be mixed with feelings of anxiety, worry and confusion about your pregnancy, the birth, the health of your baby, how your life is going to change..... If this pregnancy was 'a surprise', feelings of rejection may merge with feelings of acceptance and happiness.

Try to share your feelings, worries and doubts with those around you: your partner, your family, your friends, and with the healthcare professionals who are looking after you. Their support and trust can help you to experience this pregnancy in a positive and gratifying way.



Changes to your social environment

Pregnancy not only means experiencing changes to your body and your feelings, but you will also see changes reflected in your family and social circles.

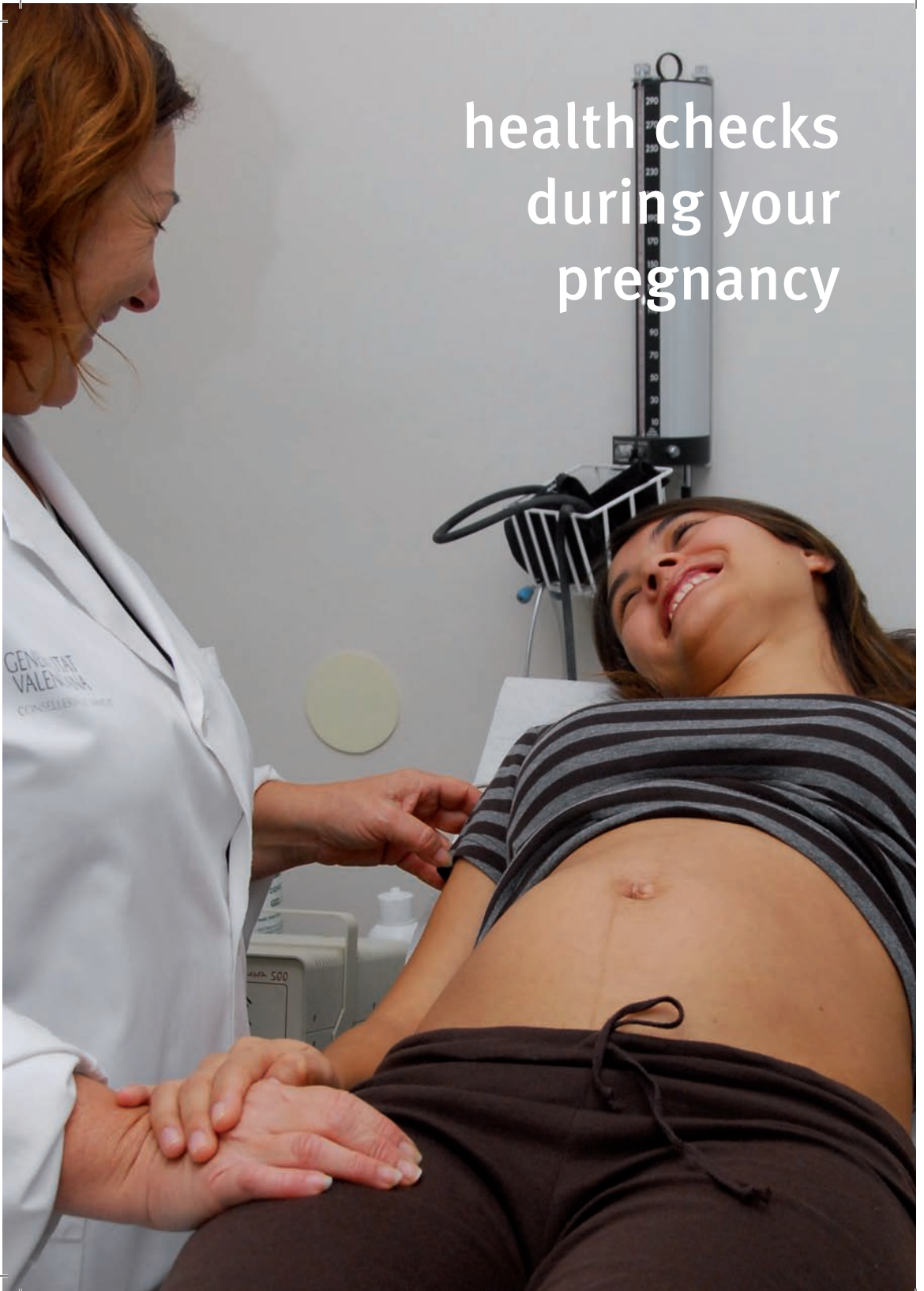
Your relationship with your partner can alter, and it is essential that you keep up a good level of communication. The pregnancy is a good time to prepare together for the arrival of your baby, deciding together how you want the birth to be, if you will breastfeed the baby,

if you will need help for the first few days, how you are going to reorganise the domestic jobs, the baby care... Sharing these emotions and decisions will be beneficial, after all **being parents is a joint responsibility**. You can also look for help and

support from other people in your family circle and from your friends. Grandparents can be a big help during your pregnancy and when the baby is born. Spending free time with friends can also be a positive experience during this stage.



health checks during your pregnancy



Healthcare during pregnancy, the birth and the postnatal period is guaranteed by the public healthcare system to all women who are resident in the Valencian Community. It is very important for your health and that of your baby that you start the monitoring of your pregnancy as soon as possible in the first trimester of gestation.

The usual way to get healthcare is to go to your local health centre. To be able to make healthcare appointments you must have a SIP card. Always contact your Health Centre in advance to make an appointment with the midwife, this way she can organise her schedule to be able to properly attend to you and others in your situation, dedicating enough time to each of you.



If you find it hard to understand and express yourself in Spanish or Valencian, we recommend that you bring someone with you who can help you to communicate. It is fundamental that there be good communication with the healthcare workers so they can attend to all your needs.

The midwife at the health centre will arrange the check-ups and monitor your pregnancy. She will tell you about the different appointments and tests that you should have, when you should go to see the gynaecologist, where to go when you go into labour, as well as informing you of

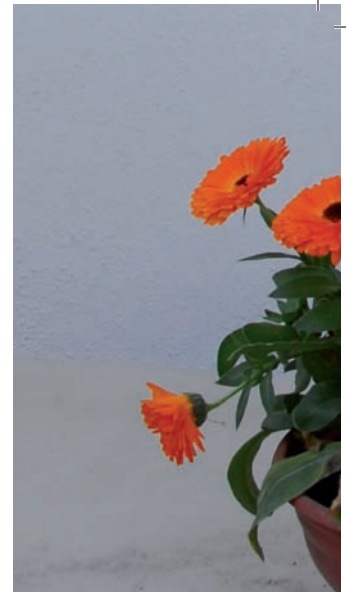
the availability of antenatal classes which the health centre organises. In addition she will give you your “Pregnancy Booklet” where the most important details from your health checks will be written down. You must take it with you to all of your check-ups, when you go for any doctor’s appointments and when you go to the maternity department at the hospital because it contains all the information necessary for the healthcare workers who are looking after you to know about the progress of your pregnancy.

If your pregnancy is considered to be at risk, you will be referred to a specialist who will monitor your pregnancy from then on.

You should not take medication without consulting your doctor. Only take medicines which have been prescribed by your doctor. The use of some medicines during pregnancy, especially during the first trimester, can have negative effects on the development of your baby.

When you visit your doctor for whatever reason, or when they are doing any diagnostic tests (x-rays), always inform them that you are pregnant.

If you have any questions, doubts or worries you should consult your doctor or midwife calmly and confidently. They may be able to help you resolve them, enabling you to go through your pregnancy in a more positive and gratifying way.



During your pregnancy you can expect to have blood tests, urine tests and vaginal and rectal discharge tests, as well as various scans in order check how your pregnancy and your baby are doing. The professionals who are attending to you will inform you of the results of these tests and in some cases ask for your written consent before you have them.

It is important to know about the current state of your health and immunity regarding certain infectious illnesses, because if you catch them for the first time during pregnancy they can seriously affect the baby.

If in doubt bear in mind the following preventative measures:

- Avoid contact with anyone who has rubella (German measles), chickenpox,... These are very contagious illnesses and are harmful for the foetus.

- If you have not had toxoplasmosis, or if after the first blood test they tell you that you are not immune to this illness, you must follow these recommendations throughout the pregnancy to avoid contracting it:

- Avoid eating raw or rarely cooked meat if it has not previously been frozen (-20° C for 24 hours).
- Wash your hands well after handling raw meat.
- Wash and rinse fruit and vegetables several times if you are going to eat them raw.
- Avoid contact with cats, especially with their excrement.
- If you are gardening, you should wear rubber gloves and wash your hands well when you finish.

Vaccinations cannot always be given during pregnancy. If you have had the correct number of vaccination doses before the pregnancy, they should protect you against those



infectious diseases. If you need any vaccination during the pregnancy, it will generally be given to you in the second or third trimester.

If you have not previously been vaccinated against tetanus, we recommend that you are given this vaccine during the pregnancy in order to prevent puerperal and neonatal tetanus (the Td vaccine is used). You should have two doses separated by an interval of no less than four weeks, the last of which should be at least two weeks before your expected date of delivery. If you have already been vaccinated, ask your doctor or midwife if it is necessary to be given a booster shot.

Given that during pregnancy there is a greater risk of complications related to flu, we recommend that you are given the flu vaccine if the second or third trimester of pregnancy coincides with the flu season.

If during your pregnancy check-ups it is found that you are not immune to rubella, you should get vaccinated (with the Triple Virus Vaccine) after the birth in order to prevent possible foetal complications in future pregnancies due to this illness.

Consult your doctor or midwife, if during your pregnancy you notice any of these symptoms:

- Repeated or intense vomiting
- Fainting or dizziness
- Scant urination or pain on urinating
- Abdominal pain, cramps or contractions
- Intense or permanent headaches
- Loss of liquid from the vagina
- Vaginal haemorrhaging (bleeding)
- Swelling or pain in an area with varicose veins
- Absence of or reduction in foetal movements
- General pruritus (itching)

advice for
a healthy
pregnancy



Pregnancy is a natural process in the life of a woman, which normally goes by without complications and which will be experienced in a positive and gratifying way if she can count on the commitment of her partner and lots of empathy and affection.

It is very important for your own and your future baby's health to look after yourself from the beginning, maintaining a healthy lifestyle and regularly attending the check-ups that the healthcare professionals in charge of monitoring your pregnancy arrange for you.

Remember that your baby is already there from the first day of your pregnancy. Don't wait to communicate and bond with him/her until he/she is born. Find a moment each day to tell and transmit to him/her how you feel and how much you love him/her. Involve your partner in this very special communication that the three of you will experience during the pregnancy.

! Here are different Web pages with interesting information for parents in Spanish:

Conselleria de Sanitat

<http://www.sp.san.gva.es/DgspWeb/>

Infantil y Mujer

Asociación Española de Pediatría

<http://www.aeped.es/infofamilia/index.htm>

These are some useful sites with information in English:

<http://www.askdrsears.com>

<http://www.babycenter.com>

If you wish to consult someone about the causes, risks and prevention of congenital illnesses, you can phone

the Telephone Information Service for Pregnant Women on 91 822 24 36 in Madrid or the Healthcare Information for the Valencian Community Telephone line (freefone) on 900 161 161 (in Spanish).

Looking after your diet

During pregnancy nutritional requirements are slightly increased, but this does not mean you need to eat for two.

It is important that you eat a varied and balanced diet, but as well as this during pregnancy you need to ensure you supplement your diet with foods rich in folic acid, calcium, iron and iodine.

It is good to eat cereals (rice, pasta, corn, etc.), pulses (lentils, peas, beans, etc.) and potatoes. Whole or wholemeal foods will also provide you with fibre and other nutrients. Limit your intake of sugars: cakes, honey... and of fats, especially animal fats found in meats, sausages, cold meats, cheese, eggs, and cream and in factory produced baked pastry foods.

Eating oily fish and olive, sunflower or corn oil will make sure you get the necessary amounts of essential fatty acids, so do not stop eating them.

! Try to alternate the type of fish you eat, do not eat too much of the 'big fish' or those fish which eat other fish (swordfish, fresh and tinned tuna) because they often have an accumulation of contaminants, such as mercury, which could be harmful to your unborn baby.

Folic acid needs to be included in your diet from before you get pregnant and during the first trimester of your pregnancy as it prevents some congenital malformations such as spina bifida and other neurological disabilities in the newborn.



Some foods, especially leafy green vegetables, are rich in folic acid, but to ensure that you are getting an adequate amount of this nutrient it is necessary to take supplements. The recommended dose of folic acid is 0.4 mg per day from before the pregnancy and throughout the first trimester. Only those women who have already had a child with spina bifida should take higher doses.

The main sources of calcium in the diet are dairy products, leafy green vegetables, foods enriched with calcium and the fine bones of certain fish such as anchovies or tinned sardines. Calcium is better absorbed when it is taken with adequate amounts of vitamin D, which you can get by being in the sun and by eating foods such as liver, oily fish, milks with added vitamin D or egg yolks. The extra daily requirements for calcium during pregnancy can be covered by drinking two glasses of skimmed milk (one glass of milk is equivalent to one and a half yoghurts or 30 g of cheese).

Even a balanced diet cannot guarantee a sufficient quantity of

iron, therefore it is necessary to take a supplement (in the form of tablets, solutions or packets) during the second and third trimesters of the pregnancy in order to prevent the development of anaemia at birth. You can increase your intake of iron with a reasonable consumption of meat, liver, eggs, fish, nuts and pulses.

Iodine is essential during pregnancy for the neurological development of the foetus. To have good reserves of iodine, it is important to eat foods rich in this nutrient (fish, milk...) before you even get pregnant, and that you always use iodised salt.

Pay special attention when buying salt and choose one of the varieties which say on the packet that they are iodized salt (sal yodada – do not confuse it with sea salt – sal marina). Using iodised salt is recommended for everyone, so the whole family will benefit.

Drink between 1 and 1 and a half litres of water a day because water is needed for the increase in blood volume, it forms part of the amniotic fluid and helps with the intestinal transit. It is beneficial for you to limit your consumption of stimulant drinks such as coffee, tea or cola.

Lastly, remember that vegetables, fruit, pulses and wholemeal grains, being high in fibre, help to avoid constipation, help you to feel full and delay the absorption of simple sugars into the blood.



Remember

- Have five to six moderate-sized meals a day
- Include fruit and vegetables in your diet. Each day aim to have 2 or 3 portions of fruit, and 2 or 3 portions of vegetables (at least one as a salad). Make room for foods such as pulses, pasta, rice, bread or potatoes, preferably in their wholemeal form.
- Have three or four daily portions of dairy products such as milk, yoghurt and cheese.
- Moderate your consumption of red meat, and make sure what you do eat is cooked thoroughly.
- You should include fish at least two or three times each week, but vary the fish that you eat.
- Eat light meals: preferably boiled, steamed or sautéed foods. Do not over indulge in roast or fried foods.
- Make sure you have an adequate intake of liquids (water, milk, juices) and avoid fizzy drinks and drinks which contain caffeine.
- You cannot drink alcohol during pregnancy; it can seriously harm your child.

This website run by the British Government has interesting information

about eating during pregnancy:
<http://www.eatwell.gov.uk>



Personal hygiene, clothing and footwear

During your pregnancy you should take care with your personal hygiene because sweating and vaginal discharge frequently increases. It is advisable to shower daily and then to apply a moisturising body lotion.

Vaginal douching is not recommended because it can alter the pH increasing the risk of infections.

If you depilate using wax, it is better to use cold wax to minimise the problem of varicose veins.

It is fundamental that you brush your teeth and tongue after every meal, and that you massage your gums with your index finger. To prevent inflammation and tooth decay you can rinse your mouth with a fluoride solution.

Try to wear comfortable and loose clothing made from natural fibres and avoid anything which is tight around your waist or legs, for example garters, hold-up stockings or belts, as they can increase the risk of varicose veins. Choose a bra which provides good support, if possible with wide shoulder straps and which is reinforced under the cups.

Lastly wear the most comfortable footwear possible. Shoes with a small heel help maintain stability and balance.

Rest is essential

Your body is making a huge effort in order to create a new life and it is possible that you may feel more tired or that you get tired more quickly than before you were pregnant.

Try to rest as much as possible.



Take small breaks throughout the day in a place where your back is well supported and your feet are raised. As your pregnancy advances, you will find it increasingly difficult to find a comfortable position to sleep in. Try sleeping on your side with your knees bent and a pillow between your legs.

Avoid lying down totally flat on your back, especially when your baby is getting big, because you could feel faint or reduce the flow of oxygen to the baby. If you put a few cushions underneath your head and back, being semi-reclined will make you feel much more comfortable and your baby will also be better off.

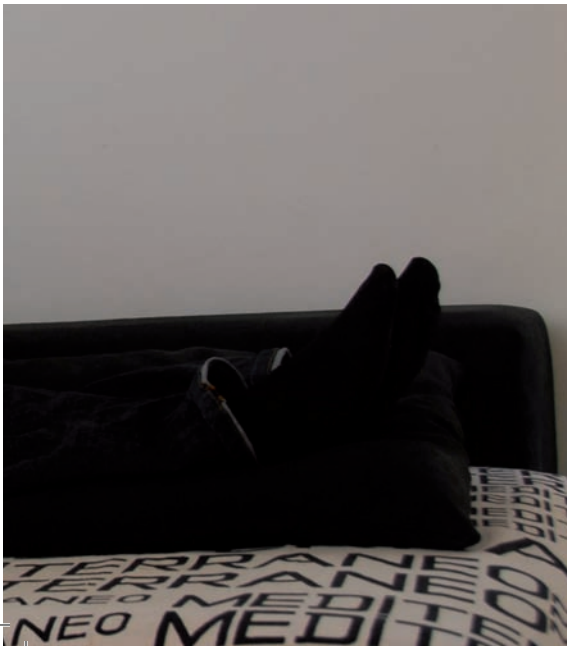
Taking care with your posture

As your pregnancy advances, your abdomen progressively increases in size, which moves your centre of

gravity and leads to a change in the balance of your body. Trying to compensate for this, incorrect postures are often adopted, arching the back excessively and causing increased tension with the resulting arrival of pain and tiredness. Because of this it is important that you try to maintain a correct posture during all of your daily activities.

Try not to stand still for too long. When you are walking or standing, keep your back straight and your head raised; avoid moving your shoulders backwards and your neck forwards. It's a case of taking your child with you, not in front of you.

If you are sitting down, make sure your back is straight and supported by the back of the chair, using cushions if necessary. When bending down, bend your knees; do not bend over forwards from the back, arching the spine.





Sexual relations

Sexual relations are a vehicle for affection and communication between a couple. During pregnancy you will usually feel more emotional, sensitive and vulnerable. Your partner may also experience new feelings towards you.

Your sex life does not need to be affected by your pregnancy, you simply need to adapt to the new situation and change some positions as the pregnancy advances so it is more comfortable for you both. The important thing is that you enjoy your sex life.

If there are no complications you can have sexual intercourse throughout the whole of your pregnancy. If you have any doubts or concerns, ask your doctor or midwife.

Physical exercise is healthy

It is beneficial to exercise during pregnancy as it increases physical wellbeing and self-esteem, improves sleep, circulation and muscle tone and helps to maintain a good posture.

You should exercise moderately and avoid becoming fatigued. Walks in the fresh air, an exercise bike, swimming, yoga and dance are all very suitable activities which can help to stimulate your circulation and prepare your body's muscle tone and respiratory system for the birth. Any sport which is strenuous or where you are at risk of falling is not advisable.

Moreover, in the antenatal classes which your health centre organises you can learn and practise some exercises which aim to improve your general wellbeing and prepare you for the birth. It is important that you know your body well and learn to recognise the signals that it gives you.

Substances which are particularly harmful during pregnancy

Pregnancy is a situation where you are particularly sensitive to the effects of certain substances such as tobacco, alcohol and other addictive substances. Their use during pregnancy can affect not only your health, but also the health and development of your baby.

Take advantage of your pregnancy and stop smoking – you have a very good reason for doing so! Smoking during pregnancy increases the risk of miscarriage, low birth-weight babies and premature births. These babies are also at greater risk from cot death (SIDS) as well as other complications. If you stop smoking you will improve your health, your quality of life and your baby's quality of life; it is time for you to start looking after yourself. **Get motivated and stop smoking; do it for yourself and for your baby, and if you are finding it very difficult ask your doctor or midwife for help.**

If your partner is a smoker, this can also be a good time for them to

stop smoking. This is the best way for them to help you to stop smoking too. You can support each other. The pregnancy and your baby's health are a joint responsibility.

Remember that it is also important that the air you are breathing at work, at home or in your leisure time, and the air your baby breathes in the future, is smoke free.

During pregnancy it is important that you do not drink any kind of alcoholic beverage, including beer and wine. No quantity, no matter how small, is safe. Drinking alcohol during pregnancy increases the risks of miscarriage and congenital deformities in the baby, as well as problems in the intellectual development of your baby. The best option is to substitute all of these kinds of drinks with fruit or vegetable juices and mineral water.

The use of any drug is harmful for you and your baby. If you are a regular drug user you should tell your healthcare workers as soon as you know you are pregnant. It is important that they have all the information available to provide you and your baby with adequate healthcare.

Travelling during pregnancy

You can travel as normal, but taking frequent breaks. It is advisable that you take with you your "Pregnancy Booklet" which has all the important information relating to your pregnancy and foetal development.

It is a useful document for any contingency as it will provide very valuable information for any healthcare workers attending to you on your trip.

!
If you are travelling by car, do not forget to fasten your seatbelt. This must be positioned correctly, with the upper strap between your breasts and the lower strap below your tummy. In no circumstances should you hold it loose, as this stops it from doing its job and increases risk of injury to you and your baby in case of an accident.

If you choose to fly, you should first check with the airline company as some have the policy of not allowing women to fly in the last trimester of pregnancy.

Compatibility with work

In general, pregnancy is totally compatible with your work life, always presuming that your work is free from risks for you in your present state and that the pregnancy can develop normally.

In your workplace there may be some factors which are harmful to your pregnancy, and it is important to protect yourself against these. They include certain physical factors (ionizing radiation, vibrations etc.), chemical substances (solvents, some metals, etc.), infectious organisms (bacteria, virus, etc.), excess physical exertion or factors related

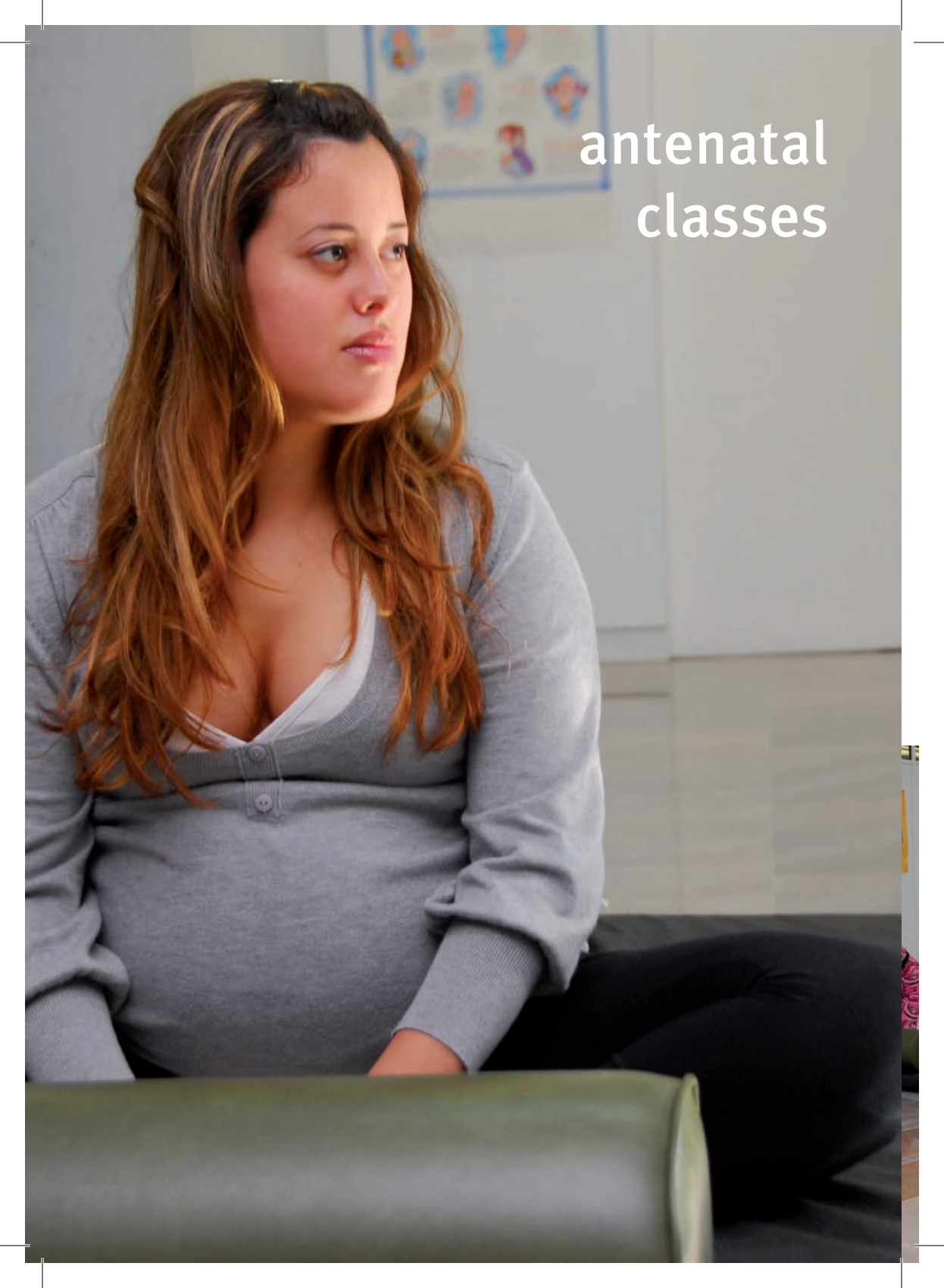
to the organisation of the work schedule (shift work, working nights, etc.).

Enquire at your workplace and if in doubt, ask your doctor or midwife; they can give you information about risks to your health or the baby's,

as well as preventative measures you can take and your workers' rights during pregnancy.

It is advisable that you take frequent short breaks during your working day to change your position.





antenatal classes

The objective of these classes is to help you to have a better pregnancy, birth and postnatal experience.

! It is important that you and your partner attend the antenatal classes which your health centre offers.

Your midwife will tell you about the content and structure of these classes, and when you should start them, preferably during the first trimester.

You will be given information, and have the chance to air your concerns about the different aspects of pregnancy, the birth and postnatal period, breastfeeding and how to look after your baby. This will help you to participate in the decision making throughout your maternity/ paternity period. You will also be in contact with other couples in the same situation as yourselves with

whom you can share experiences and worries, and help each other to resolve them.

As well as looking at the theory of pregnancy and birth, you will be offered activities aimed at improving your general wellbeing and alleviating some of the more annoying symptoms of pregnancy, and also improving muscle tone and elasticity, allowing you to become more aware of your body, preparing you for the birth. It is important that you learn to listen to and understand the messages that your body sends you, and that you learn to breathe and relax.

You should also enquire about other courses your health centre offers after the birth (postnatal classes, breastfeeding workshops and groups, baby massage classes...). It is a good idea to go to these with your baby.



the birth



The birth is the culmination of nine months of gestation, and the transition to a new stage in the life of a couple. It is a physiological process, which also requires great emotional exertion and is a major event in both your lives.

It is important that you have prepared yourself for this important moment during the pregnancy and that you have considered and decided how you would like it to proceed. Communicate your wishes to the professionals who are attending to you regarding the possibility of being accompanied by your partner or anyone else you choose, not having to lie down on the bed all the time but being able to walk around during the dilation phase, being able to choose between different methods of pain relief, having the baby handed to you to have skin to skin contact as soon as he/she is born, etc..

The onset of labour is the result of a combination of factors which act together and cause a series of signs and symptoms that you need to recognise.

Signs and symptoms which indicate that labour is getting nearer

- You feel the need for frequent yet scant urination.
- You feel your uterus contracting more frequently: 4-5 contractions / hour, which increase when you start walking.
- You feel an increase in the heaviness around your pelvis and legs and you may get cramps.
- Increased vaginal discharge.

- **Bloody Show**; the expulsion of the bloody mucus plug which sealed the cervix.
- You may feel less tired and better able to breathe due to the relief of pressure on your upper abdomen as the baby “drops” or “engages”.
- Your bag of waters breaking, with loss of liquid from the vagina.

When to go to hospital?

Unless there are any problems or complications, you are advised to stay at home and carry on with your normal daily routine until your contractions are regular.

If this is your first childbirth, you should go to the hospital when you have been having contractions every 5 minutes for at least an hour. If this is not your first childbirth, you can go sooner.

You should go to the hospital if your waters break.

Reasons to go to hospital without delay:

- Your waters break; it is important to note the colour of the liquid, as if they are a greenish colour you need to go quickly to hospital.
- If you are bleeding from the vagina.
- If you do not feel the baby moving.
- If you notice that between contractions your abdomen doesn't relax or you feel a continuous pain in your abdomen.

legislation and economic benefits



Health and safety at work (1,2,3,4,5)

In the case of pregnancy or recent childbirth, the employer is obliged to perform a risk assessment of substances, procedures or working conditions which may have a negative effect on the health of the worker and/or her child for any activity which may present a specific risk.

If, as a result of this assessment, any risk to the health and security, or any possible repercussion for the pregnancy or breastfeeding is detected, the employer must take any necessary measures to avoid exposure to these risks, by adapting the conditions of work or timetable of the worker affected. In the case that this is not possible or if in spite of the measures taken the risk is still present, the worker should be given a different post or position which is compatible with their current condition, maintaining the right to receive the same pay conditions as their original post. If these aforementioned actions are not possible, the employer can suspend the worker's contract due to risk. This suspension may be effective throughout the pregnancy and beyond, while it is still impossible for the worker to return to her former position or another position compatible with her situation. During this period she is entitled to benefits equivalent to 100% of the corresponding base salary.

All of these aforementioned measures also apply during the period of breastfeeding.

The right to healthcare for foreign Nationals (6)

Pregnant foreign nationals who are in the Valencian Community have the right to receive healthcare during their pregnancy, birth and the postnatal period.

Attending antenatal health checks and antenatal classes (1)

The worker has the right to take paid leave to attend antenatal check-ups and antenatal classes whenever it can be justified that it is necessary to attend these during the working day.

Maternity/Paternity leave (2,3,5,7)

The worker has the right to take 16 weeks leave (in the case of a single birth) which are to be taken consecutively. In the case of multiple births this is increased by two weeks per child counting from the second child. The timing of this leave can be distributed how the worker chooses, as long as at least six weeks are immediately after the birth.

If both the mother and father both work, when the leave is taken the mother can opt to transfer part of her paid leave to the father to take after the birth, which can be taken simultaneously with or immediately following her period of leave.

In the case of low-weight premature babies, where the newborn requires hospitalisation after the birth for more

than seven days, the period of leave will be increased by the same number of days as the baby is hospitalised up to a maximum of thirteen additional weeks.

In addition to two days leave for the birth of a child, a father can also take thirteen consecutive days paternity leave which is increased by two days per child counting from the second child in the case of a multiple birth. These days can be taken at any time during the mother's maternity leave or immediately following the end of it. This is independent of any leave transferred to the father from the maternity leave.

During the maternity/paternity leave, the workers will receive benefits equivalent to 100% of the corresponding base wage. Any employee who has paid social security payments for the minimum period established by law is entitled to these benefits. Employees or self-employed people included in the various "Special Social Security Systems" also have the right to these benefits for the same length of time and with the same terms and conditions as those included in the "General System". Your right to return to work is guaranteed.



These periods of leave are also available in the case of adoption or fostering.

Leave for feeding baby (4, 5, 7)

You have the right to take time off work for feeding children under the age of nine months. This time off can be for one hour during each working day, which can be split into two periods of half an hour, or if the mother wishes, as a reduction of the working day by half an hour. These hours can also be taken cumulatively as whole days. In the case of multiple births, the amount of time increases proportionately. The arrangement of the daily timetable, or reduction of the working day and the length of time this leave is taken for, is for the worker to decide. They must communicate their decision to the company at least 15 days before they are due to return to work after maternity leave.

This time off for feeding is the right of the working mother, although it can be taken by either the mother or father if both work. It can not only be taken in the case of biological children, but also for adopted or fostered children.

Relevant legislation

- 1. Ley 31/1995** de Prevención de Riesgos Laborales.
(Prevention of Risks at Work – Health and Safety)
- 2. Real Decreto Legislativo 1/1994** por el que se aprueba el Texto Refundido de la Ley General de la Seguridad Social.
(Royal Decree which passes the Restated Text of the General Law of Social Security)

3. Real Decreto 1251/2001 por el que se regulan las prestaciones económicas del sistema de la Seguridad Social por maternidad y riesgo durante el embarazo.
(Royal Decree which regulates the Social Security system benefits for maternity and risks during pregnancy)

4. Ley 39/1999 para promover la conciliación de la vida familiar y laboral de las personas trabajadoras.
(Law which promotes the reconciliation of family and work lives of workers)

5. Ley Orgánica 3/2007 para la igualdad efectiva de mujeres y hombres.
(Organic law regarding the effective equality between men and women)

6. Ley 6/2008 de Aseguramiento Sanitario del Sistema Sanitario Público de la Comunitat Valenciana.
(Health Insurance Law of the Public Health System of the Valencian Community)

7. Real Decreto Legislativo 1/1995 por el que se aprueba el texto refundido de la Ley del Estatuto de los Trabajadores.
(Royal Decree which passes the Restated Text of the Statute of Workers Law)

Economic benefits

The Minister of Social Affairs, The Valencian Parliament and some local councils give specific benefits during maternity or for mothers staying at home to look after children. These will have fixed requirements, offers and amounts. You can enquire about them in the relevant government buildings, or by consulting the Social Work Unit at your local health centre or town hall.

the 1990s, the number of people with a mental health problem has increased in the UK (Mental Health Act 1983, 1990).

There is a growing awareness of the need to improve the lives of people with mental health problems. The Department of Health (1999) has set out a vision of a new mental health system, which will be based on the following principles:

- People with mental health problems should be treated as individuals, with their own needs and wishes.
- People with mental health problems should be given the opportunity to participate in decisions about their care.
- People with mental health problems should be given the opportunity to live in their own homes and communities.

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