

Pregnancy and social welfare payments

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Introduction

If you are pregnant and getting a social welfare payment, you may be able to continue to get your payment as long as you satisfy the conditions, or transfer to another payment that better suits your needs.

This page explains how pregnancy is treated if you are getting [Jobseeker's Benefit](#), [Jobseeker's Allowance](#), [Illness Benefit](#), [One-Parent Family Payment](#) or are on an [employment scheme](#).

Pregnancy and Maternity Benefit

If you are on [maternity leave](#) from work and have paid enough [social insurance \(PRSI\)](#), you can get Maternity Benefit. You should apply for [Maternity Benefit](#) at least 6 weeks before you plan to go on maternity leave or 12 weeks if you are self-employed.

If you don't qualify for Maternity Benefit, you may be able to stay on your current payment or you may qualify for another payment.

Working family payment

If you are on [maternity leave](#) from work, you may get the Working Family Payment (WFP) with your Maternity Benefit if you meet the conditions for the WFP. If you are pregnant and have no other children, you will not qualify for WFP until your baby is born.

Pregnancy and jobseeker's payments

If you are pregnant, and claiming Jobseeker's Benefit or Jobseeker's Allowance, you can continue to get your payment. You are considered capable of work unless you have complications during your pregnancy, or you are ill.

You must be available for and genuinely seeking work to get a jobseeker's payment. This means that you must continue to look for work throughout your pregnancy.

You do not have to sign-on at your local Social Welfare or Intreo office 4 weeks before your baby is due to be born and for 8 weeks after the birth. You also do not have to prove that you are seeking work. You must tell your Intreo Centre or local Social Welfare Branch Office about your pregnancy.

Your Jobseeker's Benefit will only be paid for the number of weeks remaining on your claim. If you no longer qualify for Jobseeker's Benefit, you can apply for Jobseeker's Allowance. The rules for Jobseeker's Allowance are similar to Jobseeker's Benefit but you will have to pass a means test.

Increase for a qualified child

When your baby is born, you may qualify for an increase in your Jobseeker's Benefit or Allowance for your child. If you are parenting alone, you may qualify for the One-Parent Family Payment.

What if I am unemployed but don't qualify for a jobseeker's payment because of illness during pregnancy?

If you are sick or ill during your pregnancy you are not entitled to Jobseeker's Allowance or Jobseeker's Benefit.

You may get Illness Benefit if you have worked and have enough social insurance contributions (see below). If you are not entitled to Illness Benefit and your illness is expected to last for more than 12 months you may be entitled to [Disability Allowance](#).

If you are pregnant and either not getting a social welfare payment or not entitled to any of the above social welfare payments, you may get some financial support under the [Supplementary Welfare Allowance Scheme](#).

Pregnancy and Illness Benefit

If you are pregnant and claiming Illness Benefit, you will continue to be paid Illness Benefit if you have an illness which meets the criteria for the payment. You cannot use pregnancy itself as a medical reason to claim Illness Benefit. However, medical complications arising from your pregnancy can satisfy the medical criteria for Illness Benefit.

You must continue to send in medical certificates to qualify for Illness Benefit.

When your baby is born you may qualify for an increase in your Illness Benefit for a child dependant. You should contact the Illness Benefit section to find out if you qualify.

Pregnant and on sick leave from work

If you are on sick leave from work and getting Illness Benefit immediately before you are due to start your maternity leave, you will transfer from Illness Benefit to Maternity Benefit when your maternity leave starts, if you satisfy the social insurance contributions.

The social insurance contributions for Maternity Benefit and Illness Benefit are not the same. Therefore, if you are in employment but on sick leave and not getting Illness Benefit, you may still qualify for Maternity Benefit if you satisfy social insurance contributions.

[Health and Safety Benefit](#) is a weekly payment for employed women who are pregnant or breastfeeding, and who are granted health and safety leave by their employer.

Pregnancy and One-Parent Family Payment

If you are pregnant and getting a One-Parent Family Payment, you will continue to get the payment as long as you satisfy the conditions. When your baby is born you will qualify for an increase in your payment for a child dependant. If you are pregnant and do **not** have other children, you are **not** entitled to One-Parent Family Payment until your baby is born.

You may get half-rate Maternity Benefit with your One-Parent Family Payment if you meet the conditions for both payments. If you are not entitled to a One-Parent Family Payment, and you have no other income you may get some financial support under the [Supplementary Welfare Allowance Scheme](#).

Pregnancy and employment schemes

If you are taking part in an employment scheme you have the full range of statutory employment rights including [maternity leave](#).

If you become pregnant while on [an employment scheme](#) (Community Employment, Rural Social Scheme, Tús and Gateway schemes) you are entitled to take 26 weeks' maternity leave including an additional 16 weeks of optional unpaid leave. If possible, you will be supported to complete your 52 weeks of paid work on the same or another project when you finish your maternity leave.

You should discuss with your sponsor the payment you qualify for while you are on maternity leave. You may qualify for Maternity Benefit if you have enough PRSI contributions. Otherwise, if your spouse or partner is getting a social welfare payment, you may get a qualified adult increase on their payment.

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