

birthrights

Right to NHS services

Do I have a right to maternity care?

As a result of the serious and occasionally life-threatening health complications that can occur in pregnancy and childbirth, all women are legally entitled to access to medical attention from healthcare professionals during pregnancy, childbirth and after their baby is born.

Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights protects the right to life and requires the state to provide access to basic life-saving health services, which include maternity care in hospital. See our factsheet, [Human Rights in Maternity Care](#).

Can I be charged for my maternity care?

Any woman in the UK is entitled to receive maternity care from the NHS regardless of her citizenship or immigration status.

Like NHS treatment generally, maternity care is free of charge to those who are 'ordinarily resident' in the UK. This can include foreign nationals. It may exclude British citizens if they do not ordinarily reside in the UK.

If you are not ordinarily resident in the UK, you may be charged for your care. However, maternity care, even in early pregnancy, must not be withheld or delayed if a pregnant woman is unable to pay in advance because of the health risks associated with pregnancy and childbirth. You must be informed if charges apply to your care.

For more detailed advice about charges for maternity care, you can contact the Maternity Action [helpline](#).

Am I entitled to see an obstetrician?

NHS maternity care in the UK is midwife-led, but if you have a complication in your pregnancy, or you have a reason for concern about your pregnancy or birth, you should be given the opportunity to consult an obstetrician.

Disclaimer: Our factsheets provide information about the law in the UK. The information is correct at the time of writing (April 2017). The law in this area may be subject to change. Birthrights cannot be held responsible if changes to the law outdate this publication. Birthrights accepts no responsibility for loss which may arise from reliance on information contained in this factsheet.



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