



Pregnancy and Childbirth Handbook

May 2025



Customer service and 24-hour medical consultation hotline
*507 or 1-700-507-507 from any phone | leumit.co.il

Table of contents

Planning for Pregnancy

Essential Tests Before and During the Early Stages of Pregnancy 3

Genetic Screening Before Pregnancy 3-4

During Pregnancy

Prenatal care 5

Leumit MOM – Maternity Support Center 6

Corresponding With Your Gynecologist 7

"My Pregnancy" in the Leumit App 8

First Trimester Tests and Screenings 9-10

Second Trimester Tests and Screenings 11-13

Third Trimester Tests and Screenings 13-14

Pregnancy Package 15

Postpartum Recovery Stay 16

Childbirth Preparation Course 16

Tips for Discomfort During Pregnancy 17

Warning Signs 18

Healthy Nutrition During Pregnancy 19-21

Pelvic Floor Physiotherapy 22

General Recommendations 23

Complementary Medicine During Pregnancy 24-25

Signs That the Birth Is Getting Near 26

After Giving Birth

Postpartum Recovery 27

Successful Breastfeeding 28-29

Postpartum Care Package 30

Tests and Exams During Pregnancy, and your Leumit Gold Rights,
Benefits and Entitlements 31-32

Services During Childbirth, and your Leumit Gold Rights,
Benefits and Entitlements 33

Services Post-Partum, and your Leumit Gold Rights,
Benefits and Entitlements 34

Planning for Pregnancy

Essential Tests Before and During the Early Stages of Pregnancy

Pregnancy is one of the most significant and natural events in a family's life. Children bring joy, blessings, laughter, and countless magical moments. But before the much-anticipated birth, there are many tests designed to ensure your baby's healthy development.

At Leumit, we're here for you — offering advanced, professional care and personalized support, to help make this journey as safe and pleasant as possible.

Getting Ready for Pregnancy

We recommend scheduling an appointment with your gynecologist as soon as possible, or at least three months before you start trying to conceive. This visit will help assess your overall health and identify any medical conditions that may affect your ability to conceive or carry a healthy pregnancy. The appointment is also an opportunity to ask questions and prepare for the journey ahead.

The Israeli Ministry of Health recommends that all women of childbearing age — especially those planning to conceive — take a daily supplement of 0.4 mg folic acid. This significantly reduces the risk of neural tube defects in the developing fetus. Folic acid tablets are available over the counter.

Women who take regular medication should consult their doctor before trying to conceive. Some medications may need to be stopped or replaced, depending on your medical background.

If there is no documented immunity to **rubella (German measles) or chickenpox**, it is advised to receive vaccinations for both diseases before pregnancy. Conception should be avoided for one month following vaccination.

Supplementary Insurance – It's important you understand that not all tests and treatments are covered by the Government Health Basket. To receive the full range of benefits, it is important to join the supplementary insurance in time. When? Eligibility for certain maternity services begins only after six months of continuous membership.

Genetic Screening Before Pregnancy

Expanded Preconception Genetic Carrier Screening

Although most children are born healthy, there is a small risk (about 3%) in every pregnancy of having a child with a genetic disorder. This screening is designed to identify couples at increased risk so they can pursue further evaluation and options.

The Goal: Preventing the birth of a child with a severe genetic disease

In most of the tested conditions, risk exists when both parents are carriers of the same recessive genetic disorder. In such cases, both partners are completely healthy, but if each transmits the faulty gene to the fetus, the child may be affected.

For certain conditions (e.g., Duchenne muscular dystrophy or Fragile X syndrome), the disease is inherited through the mother alone, regardless of the father's carrier status.

This is why the woman is generally tested first, and the man is tested only if she is found to be a carrier.

When to Perform the Screening

Screening is recommended for all couples who are planning to have a child together. Ideally, the screening should be done before the first pregnancy. If it was not performed in advance, it should be done as early as possible during pregnancy.

Since new tests are added from time to time, it is important to check for updates even if you've been screened in the past.

How the Test Is Performed

Your physician can refer you, but a referral is not mandatory. You'll book an appointment with a genetic screening nurse, and both partners must attend. During the appointment, you will receive an explanation, provide your details, and give blood samples.

You will also be asked to sign an informed consent form, as required by law.

Test Results

The woman's sample is tested first. If she is not a carrier, no further testing is needed. If she is found to be a carrier, the partner's blood sample will be tested.

Each partner will receive a written report listing the conditions tested and their results.

If both partners are carriers of the same disease, they will be referred to a genetic counselor for further evaluation.

If only one partner is a carrier, the risk of having an affected child is considered low, and you will continue follow-up with your doctor.

Results are available in your medical file and accessible online to both you and your physician. As required by the Ministry of Health, the results are also securely transmitted to the Ministry.

Dor Yesharim Screening

Dor Yesharim is an organization that provides anonymous genetic compatibility testing to help prevent the birth of children with serious genetic diseases.

- The tests are anonymous and confidential
- Individuals do not receive their personal test results
- Only compatibility is reported, based on matching anonymous test numbers
- Testing is conducted in labs certified by the Ministry of Health (ISO 15189)

Note: Dor Yesharim screening does not include all of the genetic tests recommended for couples. It is important to consult a nurse to receive the full list of recommended screenings.

During Pregnancy

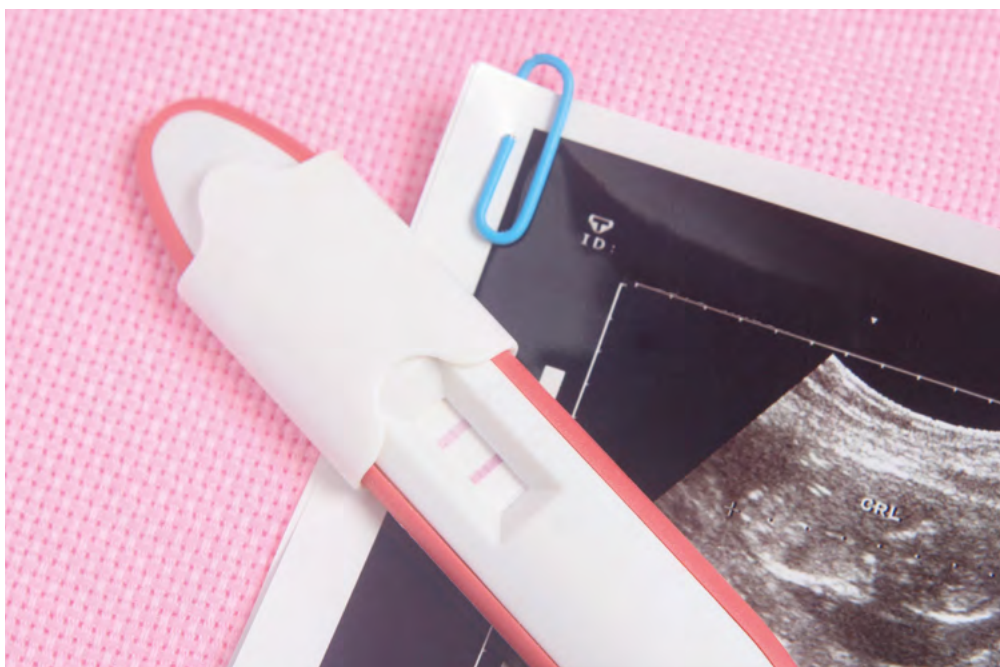
Prenatal care

Congratulations – You're Pregnant!

We invite you receive prenatal care at your Leumit clinic or Women's Health Center.

Purpose of Prenatal Care

- Ensuring the health of the mother and the fetus
- Monitoring fetal development
- Early detection of potential problems and referral for treatment to prevent complications
- Confirming normal fetal growth and advising when to seek medical attention beyond routine care
- Supporting the expectant mother's overall health
- Promoting a safe pregnancy and a healthy newborn





Maternity Support Center

A dedicated support center for pregnant women, available throughout pregnancy and during the first six weeks after birth, offering a wide range of services:

Pregnancy and Birth Coordinators

Our coordinators are familiar with your pregnancy plan and treating physician, and can assist you with everything you need:

- ✓ Scheduling appointments and required tests throughout the pregnancy
- ✓ Assistance with medical forms and paperwork
- ✓ Information on entitlements and the Pregnancy Package
- ✓ Proactive outreach and reminders throughout the pregnancy stages

Coordinators are available Sunday through Thursday, 8:00–16:00, through several channels:

 050-7059200  Mom@leumit.co.il  *507

Certified Midwives and Nurses

At Leumit MOM, certified midwives and nurses are available to support you during pregnancy and provide medical consultations.

 Sunday–Thursday: 08:00–20:00 | Friday: 08:00–13:00  *507

Joining the MOM support center:

- Send a WhatsApp to 050-7059200 or scan the QR code:
- Call Leumit Customer Service at *507
- Use the “My Pregnancy” service in the Leumit app



In urgent cases and outside of service hours, please contact the 24/7 Nurse Helpline at *507, extension 7.

Corresponding With Your Gynecologist

Through the Leumit website or app, you can contact your gynecologist with any non-urgent question – request prescriptions, referrals, or medical documents, ask about test results or other medical concerns, and receive a professional response in a quick, convenient and secure way.

Who can use this service?

This service is for non-urgent requests that do not require a physical examination and is available to pregnant women who have seen a gynecologist within the past three months.

How does corresponding work?

Corresponding is done via the Leumit website or app, similar to messaging your primary care physician or pediatrician.

1. In the Leumit website or app, select the option “Message a Gynecologist.” (פניה לרופא נשים) This option is also available under “My Pregnancy” in the app.
2. Choose “New Request.” You may select from the following:
request prescription, request referral, need test result clarification, request medical letter, or ask question.
3. After typing in your request, you will be asked to confirm your mobile number and email address.
4. Once the request has been processed, you will receive a notification by SMS and email. Replies are typically sent within five business days.

Please note: the information provided through this service does not replace an in-person consultation. This service is not intended for urgent matters. You may contact your gynecologist through this channel up to five times per quarter.

"My Pregnancy" in the Leumit App

The "My Pregnancy" service in the Leumit app brings together your entire personal pregnancy plan.

"My Pregnancy" replaces paperwork and the traditional pregnancy binder, and centralizes all relevant information in an accessible format - right on your phone. It includes all appointments, tests, results, instructions, entitlements and rights, and personalized recommendations.

Once a prenatal care file is opened by your gynecologist, the "My Pregnancy" icon will automatically appear in the Leumit app, making it easy and efficient to manage your pregnancy.

What else can you find in "My Pregnancy"?

My Pregnancy Week – The main screen displays personal details, the name of your gynecologist, and easy access to scheduling appointments. The current week of pregnancy is clearly shown, along with a list of recommended tests for this week. Completed tests will be marked with a check.

You can also view upcoming appointments and see fetal development information for the current week.

You can easily navigate through the pregnancy weeks using the timeline bar and access relevant information for each stage.

Pregnancy File – Contains all essential medical information: pregnancy details such as blood type, pregnancy number, number of fetuses, gestational age, diagnoses, allergies, a summary of lab tests, ultrasound scans, and measurements.

Test Schedule – Lists all recommended pregnancy tests and their results. Each test includes explanations, a list of providers, and information on eligibility under the Government Health Basket and Leumit Gold or Leumit Silver supplementary insurance.

You and the Baby – Describes fetal development and what changes your body is undergoing each week of pregnancy.

Good to Know – Important information on pregnancy-related rights and entitlements and how to access them.

Leumit MOM – You can join the dedicated pregnancy support center directly from the app.

In addition, you'll find information on recommended nutrition, physical activity and exercise to help you stay healthy throughout your pregnancy.

Please note: the information provided through this service does not replace a visit to your physician and is not intended for urgent medical care. You may message your gynecologist up to five times per quarter.

First Trimester Tests and Screenings

Ultrasound to Determine Gestational Age

This ultrasound is performed to determine the location of the gestational sac, the gestational age, the pregnancy's viability, and the number of embryos. Ultrasound-based dating is more accurate in the first trimester than at later stages, and is important for managing the pregnancy and interpreting test results.

This test is recommended for all pregnant women during the first trimester. It may be performed transabdominally, transvaginally, or using a combination of both, based on the physician's judgment.

Initial Routine Blood and Urine Tests

Complete blood count, fasting glucose, blood type including Rh factor, antibodies for syphilis, hepatitis B, and HIV, as well as general and culture urine tests. These tests help identify anemia, thalassemia carrier status, pregestational diabetes, blood type and antibodies, infections that may harm the fetus, and hidden urinary tract infections.

Tests should be performed while fasting. Water is permitted.

NIPT – Non-Invasive Prenatal Test

NIPT is a screening test that detects chromosomal abnormalities in the fetus by analyzing fetal DNA found in the mother's blood. The test is completely safe for both mother and baby and screens for Down syndrome and several other syndromes. It can also detect sex chromosomes and related abnormalities.

The test is available from week 10 onward. Its advantage over other tests (like amniocentesis or chorionic villus sampling) is that it is non-invasive – performed via a simple blood draw. However, it is a screening test only, not diagnostic, and it does not detect the full range of genetic conditions that can be found through invasive testing.

This is a relatively new test and is not included in the Government Health Basket. It is available privately, and members of Leumit's supplementary insurance are eligible for partial reimbursement.

Chorionic Villus Sampling (CVS)

CVS is a test in which placental tissue is sampled to obtain fetal genetic material. This tissue can be used for advanced genetic testing, at varying levels of detail, based on the recommendation of a genetic counselor and a joint decision between you, the counselor, and your treating physician (for example, chromosomal microarray – CMA, or exome sequencing).

If there is a high risk for a specific genetic disease, fetal cells can be tested to determine whether the fetus is affected.

CVS is included in the Government Health Basket. Members of Leumit's supplementary insurance are entitled to partial reimbursement for the procedure when performed at participating clinics under agreement with the supplementary insurance or privately, according to their eligibility.

You may be eligible for publicly funded CVS (covered by the Ministry of Health or your health fund) in the following cases:

- The woman is **32 years of age or older** at the start of pregnancy
- The woman is **under age 32**, but first trimester screening results indicate an increased risk and the test is recommended by a genetic counselor
- There is another medical reason, and the test is recommended by a genetic counselor

Nuchal Translucency Ultrasound and Blood Test

This test is performed between week 11 and week 13 + 6 days, to assess early risk for Down syndrome. The ultrasound measures the thickness of the fluid-filled space at the back of the fetus's neck (in millimeters).

In cases of increased fluid, there is a higher risk for genetic syndromes (such as Down syndrome) and congenital anomalies (such as severe heart defects).

Nuchal translucency is performed via ultrasound and poses no risk to the mother or fetus. As it is done early in pregnancy, abnormal findings can be evaluated quickly and followed by appropriate next steps.

To improve the accuracy of prediction and detection rates, it is recommended to combine this with the first trimester biochemical screening – a blood test measuring PAPP-A and free HCG levels. When combined with the ultrasound results, the detection rate for Down syndrome reaches about 85%, expressed as a statistical risk.

The blood test is conducted only at designated centers. You must bring the ultrasound results with you when having the blood test.

Second Trimester Tests and Screenings

Early Anatomy Scan

The early anatomy scan is usually performed between weeks 13–17 of pregnancy. It is typically done transvaginally and, in some cases, transabdominally or using a combination of both methods, depending on visibility.

This scan examines the fetal organs to detect structural abnormalities and early findings. It is not intended to diagnose chromosomal or genetic abnormalities, such as Down syndrome. Although some organs are not yet fully developed at this stage, many congenital anomalies can already be detected. The scan also checks the placenta's location, the amount of amniotic fluid, fetal measurements, and often the baby's sex.

Because some organs are not yet fully developed, this scan does not replace the detailed (late) anatomy scan.

The early anatomy scan is not included in the Government Health Basket. Members of Leumit's supplementary insurance are eligible for partial reimbursement when performed at designated clinics or privately, according to their coverage.

Maternal Serum Screening – Triple Test / AFP Test

This blood test is performed between weeks 16–19 of pregnancy. It examines several biochemical markers in the mother's blood to assess statistical risk for Down syndrome or neural tube defects in the fetus.

If the woman also underwent first trimester screening (nuchal translucency and PAPP-A/HCG), the two sets of results are combined to calculate an integrated risk assessment for Down syndrome.

If the calculated risk is high, genetic counseling and further testing will be recommended.

Amniocentesis

This test is usually performed from week 16 onward and may be done later in pregnancy if necessary. However, it is generally avoided between weeks 22–32 due to the increased risk of preterm labor in this window.

Amniocentesis is performed under continuous ultrasound guidance, minimizing the risk to the fetus. During the procedure, 20–40 ml of amniotic fluid is drawn. This amount is safe and naturally replenishes within a few hours. The test takes only a few minutes. Women who are Rh-negative will receive an anti-D injection afterward.

Amniocentesis is recommended in the following cases:

- **The mother is 32 or older at the start of pregnancy**
- **The screening results indicate a combined risk for Down syndrome higher than 1:380**
- **A previous pregnancy resulted in a child with a chromosomal abnormality**

- One of the partners is a known carrier of a chromosomal abnormality - in such cases, the suspected gene will be tested in addition to the standard chromosome analysis
- Abnormal ultrasound findings during nuchal translucency or anatomy scans raise suspicion of chromosomal disorders
- Maternal request – any woman, at any age, may choose to undergo amniocentesis and additional genetic testing of the amniotic fluid, such as chromosomal microarray (CMA) or exome sequencing. These tests increase the chance of identifying syndromes that might otherwise go undetected.

Amniocentesis may be performed through Leumit's supplementary insurance network or privately, with reimbursement available based on eligibility (in cases not covered under public funding but where broader genetic investigation is desired).

Chromosomal Microarray (CMA) or Exome Testing

These are advanced molecular genetic tests performed on amniotic fluid. The fetal DNA is analyzed at varying levels of detail. These tests have high sensitivity and can detect all significant chromosomal changes seen in a standard karyotype, as well as smaller unbalanced changes that cannot be detected through standard karyotyping.

However, these tests may occasionally reveal findings whose meaning isn't always clear, even after checking the parents. When this happens during prenatal diagnosis, it can make decisions about how to proceed with the pregnancy more complex.

These tests require prior genetic counseling. If public funding does not apply, they can still be done privately for those who wish to pursue a broader genetic evaluation of the fetus.

Detailed (Late) Anatomy Scan

This scan is performed between weeks 19–25 of pregnancy. If an early anatomy scan was already done, the late scan is preferably performed between weeks 22–24. During this ultrasound, the fetal organs are evaluated to rule out malformations or findings that may suggest fetal abnormalities.

Some organs, such as the brain, chest, and kidneys, continue to develop later in pregnancy, making it important to re-examine them at this stage.

A late anatomy scan is recommended even if an early scan was performed with normal results.

The scan is performed transabdominally and usually lasts 15–45 minutes, depending on fetal position and imaging conditions.

The late anatomy scan covered by the Government Health Basket is performed at participating clinics, in accordance with Ministry of Health guidelines. Please note: the scan does not include all organs that can be examined. Through Leumit's supplementary insurance, you may receive reimbursement according to eligibility for a scan performed at a non-participating clinic.

Please note: not all pathological conditions or fetal abnormalities can be detected through these scans.

50g Glucose Challenge Test

Gestational diabetes affects some pregnant women and increases the risk of complications during pregnancy and birth. It can also impact the fetus's development and pose risks to both mother and baby.

Between weeks 24–28, a 50g glucose challenge test should be performed. This is a screening test that indicates whether there may be a higher risk for gestational diabetes. Based on the results, your doctor may refer you for a 100g diagnostic glucose tolerance test.

There is no need to fast before this test. It is recommended to eat a normal breakfast beforehand.

The 50g glucose test is a screening tool only. It does not provide a definitive diagnosis. Along with this test, a complete blood count and urine test should also be performed.

Third Trimester Tests and Screenings

Monitoring Fetal Movements

During these months, it is important to monitor the baby's movements. You can consult your physician or nurse for guidance on how to do this properly. If you notice a decrease in fetal movements or no movements at all, it is important to seek medical evaluation promptly.

Anti-D Injections for Rh-Negative Women

If the mother has Rh-negative blood and the fetus has Rh-positive blood, there is a risk that the mother's body will develop antibodies that can harm the fetus. In this case, the mother must receive an anti-D injection. The injection contains antibodies that bind to fetal red blood cells that may have entered the mother's bloodstream, preventing her immune system from recognizing them and producing her own antibodies.

A test for Rh antibodies is performed early in pregnancy (as part of routine testing) and again between weeks 24–28 to ensure the mother has not developed antibodies on her own. This second test is usually done together with the glucose screening.

Anti-D injections are given at week 28, and also after invasive procedures (such as amniocentesis), after miscarriage, in cases of significant bleeding during pregnancy, and after birth.

Pertussis (Whooping Cough) Vaccination

The pertussis vaccine is administered to infants at 2, 4, 6, and 12 months of age. Until these doses are given, young infants are not fully protected. Administering the vaccine to the mother between weeks 27–36 of pregnancy protects the baby in two ways:

1. It allows the mother to pass high levels of pertussis antibodies to the fetus through the placenta, providing protection until the baby is old enough to be vaccinated.
2. It protects the mother from contracting pertussis and from passing it on to the newborn.

This vaccine is considered safe and effective for all pregnant women and should be given in every pregnancy to ensure maximum protection. After birth, antibodies continue to be transferred to the baby through breastfeeding.

Ultrasound for Estimated Fetal Weight

This scan is usually done between weeks 32–34 to assess the baby's growth rate and detect babies who are growing too slowly or too quickly. The scan also checks the position and presentation of the fetus and the location and function of the placenta. The estimated weight is calculated using a standard formula based on fetal measurements. As the name suggests, this is only an estimate and not an exact science – the margin of error is typically around 10–15%.

Third-Trimester Anatomy Scan

An additional anatomy scan can be performed in the third trimester, typically between weeks 30–32. This ultrasound, conducted by a specialist, may detect anatomical issues that develop later in pregnancy. The scan is limited in scope and is not included in the Government Health Basket. Women who wish to undergo this scan may do so privately.

GBS Test During Pregnancy

Group B Streptococcus (GBS) is a bacterium found in some pregnant women. It can be passed to the baby during birth and, in rare cases, may cause serious illness in the newborn. Your gynecologist may recommend a vaginal and rectal swab between weeks 35–37 to test for this bacterium.

If the result is positive and you are found to be a carrier, you must inform the delivery room staff so that you can receive preventive antibiotics during labor to reduce the risk of passing the infection to the baby.

Complete Blood Count

This routine test is repeated at various stages of pregnancy. It assesses the levels and ratios of different blood components and helps detect abnormal values (either too high or too low) that may require medical attention.

Post-Term Pregnancy – From Week 40 Onward

After week 40, the risk of complications increases, and follow-up becomes more intensive. Post-term pregnancy monitoring includes fetal monitoring (non-stress test) every 2–3 days, ultrasound assessments as needed, and nurse follow-up.

Private Tests and Tests Not Included in the Government Health Basket

Some tests are not included in the Government Health Basket or are only available under specific medical indications. If you wish to undergo such tests, you may do so privately or use your entitlement through Leumit's supplementary insurance (Leumit Gold).

Explanations about these tests and their medical importance are provided earlier in this booklet. These tests include:

- Early anatomy scan
- NIPT – a non-invasive screening test for chromosomal abnormalities using fetal DNA from the mother's blood
- Chorionic villus sampling (CVS) – only under specific indications listed in the Health Basket
- Amniocentesis – only under specific indications listed in the Health Basket
- Chromosomal microarray (CMA) or exome sequencing – extended analysis of amniotic fluid samples

Pregnancy Package

The Pregnancy Package provides reimbursement for a variety of services and expenses related to pregnancy, childbirth, and recovery – throughout pregnancy and up to six months after birth. Your eligibility for Postpartum Rest and Recovery is for up to two months from the day of hospital discharge. The reimbursement is for a **total of 9,290 NIS** (this amount is index-linked), 2,322 NIS per pregnancy, for up to four pregnancies.

Within this total, you may use up to 2,322 NIS per pregnancy, for up to four pregnancies.

The total entitlement applies to your entire membership period in Leumit Gold supplementary insurance.

Entitlements that were used with a previous health fund do not count toward this amount (only reimbursements processed by Leumit are taken into account).

After joining Leumit Gold, there is a 6-month waiting period before you are eligible for the Pregnancy Package.



Postpartum Rest and Recovery

Leumit Gold members are entitled to R&R starting from their first birth, and for every birth thereafter.

For the **first, second, third, and fourth child**, Leumit offers:

- **3 days** after a vaginal birth
- **5 days** after a cesarean section

Leumit is the only health fund that provides this service **after each of the first three births**.

After that, eligibility for the R&R is determined based on the number of children in the family: the number of days you are entitled to equals the number of your children minus one (for example, with your fifth child you are entitled to 4 R&R days; with your seventh, 6 days; and so on).

In addition, you are entitled to reimbursement for **up to 3 additional days**, subject to the maximum limit, using the Pregnancy Package.

Childbirth Preparation Course

This comprehensive and engaging course covers all the essential and up-to-date information.

Its purpose is to prepare the couple for childbirth, welcoming the baby, and the first stages of care.

The course provides an opportunity to experience childbirth preparation in a group setting, and includes:

- **Introduction to different methods for managing labor pain**
- **Exercises to support well-being during pregnancy and birth**
- **Answers to questions, information, and guidance**
- **Knowledge about the physiology of pregnancy and the birth process**

Leumit Silver and Gold members are eligible for a reimbursement according to the terms of the supplementary insurance. There is no waiting period for this benefit.

To check your eligibility for a childbirth preparation course, contact the Leumit MOM center.

Tips for Discomfort During Pregnancy

	System	Discomfort	Cause	Relief Tips
1.	Digestive	General digestive discomfort	No single cause; usually resolves after pregnancy.	Requires understanding and support from family
2.	Digestive	Excessive saliva	Dilation of blood vessels	Use a soft toothbrush, massage gums, brush properly, use special mouthwash
3.	Digestive	Nausea and vomiting	Unknown cause; common until weeks 12–14	Eat small meals frequently, choose low-fat foods, drink water often
4.	Digestive	Heartburn	Increased stomach acid, pressure from uterus	Avoid bending forward, eat blanched almonds, sip water or lemon juice, breathing techniques and meditation, separate food from drink, avoid lying down right after meals
5.	Digestive	Food Cravings	Unknown cause	If high in calories – find a substitute and consult a dietitian if needed
6.	Digestive	Constipation	Decreased bowel movement, pressure from growing uterus, side effect of iron supplements	Eat high-fiber foods (e.g., vegetables, whole grains), drink plenty of water, consider switching iron supplement
7.	Digestive	Hemorrhoids	Dilated blood vessels, increased blood volume	Use pregnancy-safe ointments, sitz baths, walking, Paula method exercises
8.	Respiratory	Shortness of breath	Pressure on diaphragm	Elevate upper body while lying down, practice relaxation breathing
9.	Musculoskeletal	Back pain	Shift in center of gravity, hormonal changes Loosening of ligaments and joints	Avoid lifting heavy objects, reduce physical effort from week 28 on, practice posture, wear supportive shoes, perform stretching exercises

Warning Signs

Some symptoms require medical evaluation and consultation:

- **Persistent or sudden vomiting (new symptom)**
- **Severe headaches**
- **High fever**
- **Vision disturbances or blurriness / black spots in the visual field**
- **Swelling in the legs, hands, or face**
- **Excessive weight gain**
- **Burning sensation, urgency, or frequency when urinating**
- **Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing**
- **Suspected preterm contractions**
- **Decreased or absent fetal movements**
(It is recommended to track fetal movements regularly)
- **Vaginal bleeding**
- **Watery vaginal discharge, possibly indicating rupture of membranes (water breaking)**
- **Ongoing abdominal pain**



Please note:

During pregnancy and breastfeeding, avoid the use of alcohol, tobacco, and recreational or illegal drugs.

Healthy Nutrition During Pregnancy

General Guidelines for Pregnant Women

Healthy nutrition is the foundation for balanced and healthy living. During pregnancy, it is especially important for fetal development, tissue growth, and preparation for breastfeeding. Blood supply increases, and nutrients must support both the mother and the developing fetus, ensuring their health.

To create a personalized and appropriate nutrition plan, it is recommended that you inform your healthcare provider of any relevant information, such as vegetarian or vegan diets, food allergies, digestive issues, or special dietary needs.

If needed, you can consult with a dietitian at your clinic for guidance and support, especially in cases that require specific nutritional attention.

Variety in Food Choices

Make sure your daily menu includes foods from all five food groups: grains, proteins, fats, vegetables, and fruits – ideally in a variety of colors and textures.

Structured Meals and Managing Side Effects

You should try and eat three main meals and two to three light snacks each day. Each meal should ideally include foods from at least three food groups – for example, a slice of bread with avocado and tomato, or chicken with potatoes and green beans.

During pregnancy, food preferences may shift due to symptoms like nausea. In such cases, Leumit dietitians can help adjust your meal plan.

Try eating your first meal soon after waking. Space the remaining meals about two to three hours apart, with the final meal at least two hours before bedtime. Many women experience symptoms like nausea or heartburn. Eating small, frequent meals, chewing slowly, and separating food from liquids may help. Dry foods like low-fat crackers or toast and avoiding carbonated drinks and fried foods, can also provide relief.

Adjusting Food Quantities

Food intake should be tailored to each woman's personal needs. The right amount depends on factors such as age, physical activity, height, weight, and overall health. A healthy weight before pregnancy, along with appropriate weight gain during pregnancy, contributes to better outcomes.

Weight Gain

Gaining the recommended amount of weight during pregnancy helps reduce the risk of pregnancy complications, such as preeclampsia, gestational diabetes, high blood pressure, cesarean delivery, and preterm birth.

It is recommended to stay under medical and nutritional supervision through your gynecologist, maternal health center, or a dietitian. Regular monitoring can help identify any concerns early and provide proper dietary guidance.

Washing Vegetables and Hands

Always wash vegetables before eating them. Be sure to wash your hands with soap and water before and after handling raw meat or fish, and maintain proper hygiene in your food preparation area.

Recommendations

- Limit your intake of products containing caffeine (i.e. coffee, tea, cola and energy drinks) to no more than three cups per day
- Reduce consumption of sweets, snacks, and sugary drinks
- Limit the use of artificial sweeteners
- Limit salt intake to no more than 5 grams per day
- Limit use of monosodium glutamate (MSG)

Essential Nutrients During Pregnancy

- **Calcium** – Make sure to consume enough calcium (consult your dietitian)
- **Fats** – Choose foods low in saturated fats and trans fats, and low in cholesterol
- **Fiber** – Increase your intake of dietary fiber
- **Water** – Drink at least 10 cups of water daily. Stay hydrated and watch for signs of dehydration
- **Vitamins and Supplements** – Take vitamins and other supplements only after consulting your doctor or dietitian

Raw and Undercooked Foods

Avoid consuming raw or undercooked fish and meat, including sushi, ceviche, tartare, smoked or processed meats (such as salami or pastrami), and unpasteurized dairy products or cheeses.

Also avoid ready-made salads and undercooked eggs.

Wash vegetables thoroughly before eating, and wash your hands with soap and water after handling raw meat or fish.

Make sure to store raw meat and cooked food separately in the refrigerator, and use separate cutting boards for meat and for fruits and vegetables.

Folic Acid

During the reproductive years, every woman should take a daily supplement of **400 mcg folic acid**.

Folic acid is especially important during the **three months before pregnancy** and the **first three months of pregnancy**, as it reduces the risk of **neural tube defects (NTD)** in the fetus by up to 70%.

Some women need a higher dose – for example, those with obesity, a family history of NTDs, or those taking anti-epileptic medication, or with medical conditions affecting nutrient absorption.

Consult your gynecologist to determine the right dosage for you.

Iron Supplementation

Following doctor's instructions, you should start taking iron supplements from the end of the **1st trimester until six weeks postpartum**. After the birth, the recommended dosage is **30 mg per day**.

You may also take a combined supplement containing **iron and folic acid**.

Iodine Supplementation

Pregnant women require **increased iodine intake** to meet the hormonal needs of their own bodies and the developing fetus, as well as during breastfeeding.

Consult your doctor or dietitian about iodine supplementation.

Vitamin D

Vitamin D is a fat-soluble vitamin produced by the body when exposed to ultraviolet (UV) sunlight. It is naturally found in very few foods.

During pregnancy and breastfeeding, it is recommended to take **200–400 IU per day** (5–10 mcg).

Vitamin D helps absorb calcium in the intestines, regulates calcium and phosphate levels in the blood, and supports bone growth and strength. It also plays a role in immune system function, muscle activity, and gene regulation.

Recent research also links vitamin D deficiency with increased infection risk and other health concerns – making proper supplementation during pregnancy important.

Foodborne Illness Risks During Pregnancy

During pregnancy, the body naturally undergoes hormonal changes, some of which affect how the immune system functions.

At the same time, the fetus's immune system is still immature – meaning that both mother and baby are at greater risk of illness from contaminated or improperly handled food.

For this reason, it is important to follow clear food safety guidelines and receive proper dietary counseling from a certified Leumit dietitian

Pelvic Floor Physiotherapy

Physical Activity

Staying active during pregnancy is important and recommended. It is best to engage in physical activity at least three times a week, for about 30 minutes each time.

The type and intensity of activity should be adapted to your health status and fitness level. Most women can continue with the same activity they performed before pregnancy.

Walking, swimming, and light aerobic exercise are safe throughout pregnancy. Even women who were not previously active can begin exercising during pregnancy – with medical approval.

Choose activities that carry no risk of falling or losing balance and that do not pose a threat to the fetus.

What about the pelvic floor?

If you're experiencing changes in urination patterns, urgency, difficulty holding in urine, leakage when coughing or sneezing, constipation, or pelvic pain – you're not alone. These symptoms are common during pregnancy and especially after birth. They are often caused by weakness in the **pelvic floor muscles**.

So what is the “pelvic floor”?

The pelvic floor is a group of muscles, connective tissues, blood vessels, and nerves that stretch from the back of the pelvis to the front, forming a kind of supportive hammock. These muscles support the uterus, bladder, and rectum, and help control continence and posture.

What happens to these muscles during pregnancy and birth?

Several things can weaken the pelvic floor during this time:

- The growing fetus puts increasing pressure on the pelvic floor
- Hormonal changes cause these tissues to loosen and lengthen – sometimes up to 3 times their normal length
- During birth, significant stretching occurs, which may result in tears

Weak pelvic floor muscles can lead to urinary incontinence, hemorrhoids, back pain, and even prolapse of the uterus or bladder.

What can you do?

You can meet with a physiotherapist trained in pelvic floor therapy as early as the end of the first trimester. This service is included in the Government Health Basket during pregnancy and postpartum.

Daily pelvic floor exercises during pregnancy can help prevent discomfort and long-term damage. Hormonal changes and the physical strain of labor (especially in multiple births or the delivery of a large baby), can affect the pelvic floor. A postnatal pelvic floor assessment and rehabilitation are recommended after childbirth.

During therapy, you will learn to identify your pelvic floor muscles and perform exercises to strengthen and rehabilitate them. This may include abdominal muscle work and scar care, especially if you've had a cesarean section or episiotomy.

General Recommendations

Smoking and Exposure to Smoke

Smoking and exposure to cigarette smoke are always harmful – especially during pregnancy.

When a pregnant woman smokes, or is exposed to smoke in her environment, toxic substances accumulate in her bloodstream and pass through the umbilical cord to the fetus, potentially causing harm.

Caution with Medications, Supplements, and Herbal Products

Not all medications are safe for use during pregnancy. The same goes for natural remedies and nutritional supplements.

Before receiving any treatment, you must inform every healthcare provider – doctor, nurse, pharmacist, dentist, x-ray technician, or other – that you are pregnant or planning to become pregnant.

Some natural or homeopathic products may be sold without a prescription but can still be harmful to you or your baby.

Always consult your doctor before taking **any supplement, vitamin, or natural remedy** – even if it's available over the counter.

Alcohol Consumption

Any alcohol you drink during pregnancy passes from your digestive system into your bloodstream and then to the fetus via the placenta.

Alcohol can cause a wide range of fetal injuries, including impaired growth, nervous system damage, and physical malformations.

Drug Use

Drug use during pregnancy is dangerous for both mother and baby.

Substances consumed by the mother cross the placenta and may harm the fetus or the newborn.

Potential consequences include low birth weight, withdrawal symptoms after birth, developmental delays, and learning difficulties.

Cannabis (marijuana) and hashish are also considered harmful and may negatively affect the baby.

Important to Know:

Any medication, supplement, or product – even if available without a prescription – should only be used **after consulting with your healthcare provider**.

You can receive free counseling about the use of medications, infections, chemicals, or illnesses during pregnancy through the National Teratology Information Services:

- **Jerusalem:** 02-5082825
- **Rabin Medical Center (Beilinson):** 03-9377474 or 03-9376911
- **Rambam Poison Center:** 04-8541900
- **Assaf Harofeh Medical Center:** 08-9779309

Complementary Medicine During Pregnancy

Pregnancy often comes with a range of physical symptoms such as nausea, weight gain, sleep disturbances, and back pain, along with emotional changes, stress and excitement.

To ease these symptoms and prepare both body and mind for birth, we invite you to explore a variety of **complementary medicine treatments**. These services are available through Leumit's supplementary insurance.

Paula Method

This method focuses on activating the circular muscles surrounding areas like the eyes, mouth, and pelvic floor. Training these muscles helps improve awareness, flexibility, and control of the pelvic floor, which plays a key role in pregnancy and childbirth.

Yoga

A physical and mental practice that helps pregnant women adapt to the body's physiological changes.

Yoga improves flexibility, strengthens muscles and joints, and corrects posture – which can reduce fatigue and pain. It also supports emotional well-being by helping manage fear and anxiety related to pregnancy and birth.

Feldenkrais Method

This method helps the woman reconnect with her body through mindful, fluid movement.

It supports a lighter, more intuitive birthing process by enhancing posture, flexibility, and body awareness – using simple, gentle exercises.

Alexander Technique

This technique teaches “thinking in movement” – improving how we use our bodies and how that influences our physical, mental, and emotional functioning.

It can relieve pregnancy-related back pain and improve coordination, which is especially useful during labor.

Reflexology

Pregnancy weight gain can cause discomfort and swelling. Reflexology treatments, applied to the feet, promote healthy blood flow and help prevent edema.

This calming treatment helps release tension and supports the immune and digestive systems. It may also relieve symptoms like fatigue, constipation, and stress.

Shiatsu, Massage, Chiropractic, and Osteopathy

Back pain is common in pregnancy. These treatments can help reduce or even eliminate it.

Homeopathy

Pregnancy can bring uncertainty and emotional ups and downs — especially as labor approaches. Homeopathic treatments may help reduce anxiety and fear, and support postpartum recovery.

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM)

Chinese medicine can help with a range of pregnancy-related issues, including nausea and vomiting, colds during pregnancy, immune system support, back pain, edema, high blood pressure, and urinary tract infections.

Naturopathy

Naturopathic care may include lifestyle changes, nutrition guidance, and support for gestational diabetes, preeclampsia, nausea, heartburn, and other common concerns during pregnancy.

Signs That the Birth Is Getting Near

“Lightening” – The Baby Drops

The presenting part of the fetus (usually the head) descends into the pelvis.

This often relieves pressure on the stomach and lungs, and may result in a noticeable lowering of the uterus.

Frequent Urination

As the baby drops into the pelvis, it puts pressure on the bladder, which can increase the need to urinate.

“Nesting” Urge

Many women experience a strong desire to clean, organize, paint, or prepare the home before the birth – a phenomenon known as “nesting.”

How to Know When It’s Time

How can you tell that labor has begun, and when should you go to the delivery room?

There are **three main signs** that indicate labor is starting (the instructions apply to full term pregnancies):

Sign	What You’ll Notice	What You Should Do
1. Regular contractions	Contractions usually start off mild and irregular, often felt as lower back pain that moves toward the lower abdomen. Within 1–2 hours, they typically become stronger and more frequent.	If the contractions are still mild and spaced out, continue your daily activities or try to rest. Inform your partner or birth companion. Once contractions become strong and occur every 3–5 minutes, go to the delivery room.
2. Bloody Show/ Mucus plug discharge	The mucus plug that seals the cervix during pregnancy is released. It may be tinged with blood and appear as pink or brownish mucus at the vaginal opening.	Losing the mucus plug is a sign that your body is getting ready for labor, but it doesn’t necessarily mean labor is starting. However, if the bleeding is heavy (like a period), go to the hospital immediately.
3. Water Breaking	The amniotic sac breaks and fluid begins leaking from the vagina. It may come as a slow trickle or a sudden gush that soaks your clothing or bed.	If you suspect your water has broken, head to the delivery room right away. To protect your mattress, use a waterproof sheet during the last weeks of pregnancy. You may also want to sit on a towel in the car.

After Giving Birth

Postpartum Recovery

Becoming a new mother can bring overwhelming emotions, high expectations and even self-judgment. It's common to experience sadness, crying, confusion, anxiety, or even sleep disturbances after birth.

Your partner and extended family should be attentive to your emotional recovery.

If sadness and crying persist or become more intense, it's very important to speak with your nurse or physician for support.

You should visit your local **maternal and child health center (Tipat Halav)** about one week after giving birth for follow-up for both you and your baby.

Please bring your hospital discharge summary to this visit. During the appointment, you'll be asked to fill out the **EPDS (Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale)** questionnaire to help identify signs of postpartum depression and offer appropriate help if needed.

You should also schedule an appointment with your **gynecologist 4–6 weeks after birth** for a full postpartum checkup.

During the first 6 weeks postpartum, you should avoid lifting heavy objects or doing physically strenuous activities.

Continue taking your **iron supplement** until your follow-up appointment with your gynecologist.

Always make sure your baby is secured in an **age-appropriate car seat** during travel.

For any questions or concerns, consult your clinic or maternal health nurse.

We also recommend **registering your baby for Leumit Gold**, so they can enjoy full access to all available benefits.

Long-term care insurance: babies are automatically enrolled in Leumit's long-term care insurance from birth. (Children up to age 19 are covered at no cost.)

Successful Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding is a right, not an obligation.

Every woman who chooses to breastfeed should feel confident in her decision.

The decision whether or not to breastfeed is usually made during pregnancy. It's important to be informed and prepared. Breastfeeding is a natural continuation of pregnancy and birth.

You are welcome to consult with the pregnancy support nurses and midwives at the Leumit MOM center about breastfeeding and any other related topics.

Why Breastfeeding Is Important for Your Baby

Breast milk helps protect your baby from illness and infection. It is essential for proper growth and development. It also reduces the risk of allergies, diarrhea, respiratory infections, ear infections, type 1 diabetes, obesity, and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).

Why Breastfeeding Is Beneficial for You

- Reduces the risk of certain diseases in women
- Helps the uterus return to its normal size more quickly
- May help you return to your pre-pregnancy weight sooner
- Strengthens the bond between mother and baby
- Studies show it may reduce the risk of postpartum depression

To prepare for breastfeeding, it's helpful to know what to expect and how to handle common challenges.

Key Breastfeeding Tips

- Hold your baby skin-to-skin as early and as often as possible
- In the first weeks, babies typically nurse 8–12 times in 24 hours
- From day 4 onward, monitor for at least 5–6 wet diapers and 3–4 loose stools per day
- You should hear your baby swallowing during nursing
- Offer both breasts during each feeding
- A content baby after feeding is a good sign
- Your baby should return to birth weight by 10–14 days of age, with steady weight gain during the first and second years

Visit your **Tipat Halav clinic** 7–10 days after birth for a full checkup and weight monitoring.

Breastfeeding and Lactation Support

The breastfeeding experience can vary from person to person. You may face challenges such as breast engorgement or nipple pain, especially in the early days. To help prevent and manage these issues, it's important to alternate breasts at each feeding

Lactation Consultation

Leumit offers support from certified **lactation consultants** - available in person at the clinic, by phone, or via video call.

The first **two consultations are free of charge**. Additional sessions may be booked under your Leumit supplementary insurance.



Postpartum Care Package

The first months after giving birth bring many new challenges, both physical and emotional.

At Leumit, we offer a wide range of treatments to help you take care of your health during this exciting and demanding time.

What's included in the care package?

- **Postnatal massage treatments**

Fatigue and physical strain often result in back pain and tension in the spine. Massage with therapeutic oils can help relieve pain and promote relaxation.

- **Weight management workshop**

This workshop offers tools for maintaining a healthy lifestyle after birth. Topics include balanced nutrition and its importance during the postpartum period.

- **Reflexology**

Foot treatments that promote relaxation, reduce stress, and stimulate circulation.

- **Homeopathic and herbal remedies**

These treatments may help with postpartum depression or mood changes, and support breast milk production.

- **Infant massage workshop**

A hands-on workshop for parents and babies.

Learn massage and aromatherapy techniques that support your baby's development and strengthen body systems.

Massage may also help relieve gas, constipation, sleep issues, and congestion. In addition to the physical benefits, infant massage is a joyful bonding experience.

The workshop also includes education on immune, digestive, and respiratory systems, and how to manage common conditions like ear infections, constipation, diarrhea, fever, and more.

Leumit offers treatments such as massage, reflexology, shiatsu, homeopathy, Bach flower remedies, and naturopathy at your home or workplace:

- Special discounted rates for complementary medicine treatments
- Available only to Leumit supplementary insurance members
- Each session lasts 45 minutes (except chiropractic and osteopathy)

Tests and Exams During Pregnancy

and your Leumit Gold Rights, Benefits and Entitlements

Important: Some of the benefits are provided through Leumit Gold in every pregnancy. Others are not covered by Leumit Gold but are included in the general Government Health Basket.

Name of Test or Service	When to Perform It	Eligibility for Reimbursement
Rubella and Chickenpox Vaccine For women who are not immune	Preconception	
Bonjesta Medication	For women suffering from severe nausea	50% reimbursement
Blood pressure, weight, urine (protein + sugar), edema check and guidance	Throughout pregnancy	Free
Blood tests: CBC, blood type incl. Rh, antibody screening, tests for infectious hepatitis, glucose (fasting), syphilis, HIV, general and culture urine test	Week 6–8	Free
NIPT (non-invasive prenatal test for early detection of fetal chromosomal abnormalities)	From week 10	Reimbursed through Pregnancy Package
1st Trimester Ultrasound	Weeks 6–12	Reimbursed through Pregnancy Package
Chorionic villus sampling (CVS)	Weeks 11–13	Out-of-network: 80% up to 1,704NIS Free of charge if over age 32 (via Health Basket) Additional reimbursement via Pregnancy Package
Nuchal translucency scan	Weeks 11–13+6	80% up to 426NIS Additional reimbursement via Pregnancy Package
PAPP-A and free β -HCG blood test	Weeks 11–13+6	Free
Early anatomy scan	Weeks 13–17	In-network: 115 NIS co-pay Out-of-network: 80% up to 639 NIS Additional reimbursement via Pregnancy Package
Amniocentesis	Between weeks 16–22 (can also be performed later depending on risk factors and medical advice)	In-network: 452 NIS – for women under 32 Out-of-network: 80% reimbursement up to 2,726 NIS (for women under 32) Fully covered from age 33 through the Health Basket. Additional reimbursement available via the Pregnancy Package
Genetic Microarray (CMA)	Based on the amniocentesis test	Included under the eligibility framework for amniocentesis

Name of Test or Service	When to Perform It	Eligibility for Reimbursement
Triple Screening (Biochemical Screening of Second Trimester) A biochemical test ("triple test"), a biochemical screen to identify markers of neural tube defects and hormone levels in the mother, used to calculate the combined statistical risk for Down syndrome	Weeks 16–20	Subject to co-payment
Late Anatomy Scan	Weeks 19–25	Out-of-network: 80% reimbursement up to 852 NIS. Additional reimbursement available through the Pregnancy Package.
For all women: 50g glucose challenge test, CBC, and urine test. If needed, a 100g glucose tolerance test is performed – all as per medical recommendation.	Between weeks 24–28	Free
Anti-D vaccine – for women with RH-negative blood type. The vaccine is given based on OB-GYN recommendation, and after invasive procedures like amniocentesis or chorionic villus sampling, or in case of bleeding. Also given routinely at week 28.	Week 28 of pregnancy, or in any case of vaginal bleeding, post-amniocentesis or CVS, and after birth if the baby is Rh-positive	
Antibody screening for RH-negative women	At the beginning of pregnancy and from week 26	Free
Childbirth preparation course	Starting from week 28	80% reimbursement up to 355 NIS for any childbirth preparation course. Additional reimbursement via Pregnancy Package.
Tdap vaccine (Pertussis)	Between weeks 27–36 If unvaccinated, it is advisable to get vaccinated at the earliest opportunity.	Free
Ultrasound – fetal weight, growth, and position assessment	Between weeks 32–34	Free
Edinburgh postnatal depression screening	From week 26	Free
Third trimester anatomy scan	Weeks 30–32	Reimbursed via Pregnancy Package
Post-term pregnancy monitoring Includes fetal monitoring every 2–3 days, ultrasound and blood/urine tests	Starting from week 40	Free
Routine OB-GYN pregnancy follow-ups	Throughout pregnancy	Free
Specialist consultation	Up to 3 consultations per year	In-network: 200 NIS co-pay; reimbursement via Pregnancy Package – up to 716 NIS per consultation

All amounts valid as of November 1, 2024 and are subject to CPI adjustments.
The official and binding reference is the Leumit Gold supplementary insurance agreement.

Services During Childbirth

and your Leumit Gold Rights, Benefits and Entitlements

Service	Reimbursement Eligibility
Doula Services (Does not include reimbursement for services from a midwife or nurse-midwife)	Reimbursement through the Pregnancy Package, up to a ceiling of 1,717 NIS
Umbilical Cord Blood Storage	Reimbursement through the Pregnancy Package

Services Post-Partum

and your Leumit Gold Rights, Benefits and Entitlements

Service	Reimbursement Eligibility	Notes
Lactation consultation	Up to 179 NIS per consultation, up to 2 consultations during Leumit Gold membership	Breast pumps and nursing equipment can be purchased at discounted prices through Leumit's contracted providers. These items are not included in the Pregnancy Package, and there is no entitlement to reimbursement for the purchase of equipment or accessories.
R&R after childbirth (first-fourth child)	3 days R&R after a vaginal birth 5 days R&R after a C-section 80% reimbursement up to NIS413 per day	The reimbursement is not counted against the Pregnancy Package
R&R after childbirth (fifth child and beyond)	Number of days = number of children minus 1. 80% reimbursement up to NIS413 per day	
Additional R&R days	Up to 3 additional R&R days beyond the fourth child. 75% reimbursement up to 456 NIS per day	
Complementary medicine treatments	Low co-payment	No limit on the number of treatments.
Infant sleep consultation	Reimbursed under the Pregnancy Package- up to 457 NIS per consultation	
Personal in-home consultation for postpartum physical activity and/or proper nutrition by a certified dietitian	Reimbursed under the Pregnancy Package- up to NIS per consultation	

Leumit Customer Service Center
and 24/7 Medical Phone Consultation
Phone: 1-700-507-507 or *507 from mobile
leumit.co.il

For information about Leumit's
Women's Health Centers:

