



First Nations Health Benefits Coverage:

Pregnancy and Infant Care



First Nations Health Authority
Health through wellness

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The FNHA Health Benefits Program can support you and your baby through your pregnancy and after you give birth.

Pregnancy brings lots of change. Some changes may be physical while others may be social or emotional. Throughout your pregnancy, it is important to talk about your questions or health concerns with your health care provider, such as a community health nurse, pharmacist, nurse practitioner, doctor, or midwife.

The Health Benefits Program can support you by covering many of the medically-necessary items and services your health care provider might recommend. This guide provides an overview of the Health Benefits coverage available to you and your family. In this guide, coverage areas are divided up according to health concerns that may come up during pregnancy and after. However, all coverage is available at any time, regardless of where you are in your pregnancy journey. If you have questions about what Health Benefits covers, or if you are having trouble accessing coverage, call us at **1-855-550-5454**. You can also find information on how to access your benefits coverage at: fnha.ca/benefits

Resources are listed at the end of this guide that can offer health support and advice during and after your pregnancy.





Your Coverage During Pregnancy

Travel for Prenatal Care Checkups and Delivery

Prenatal care checkups are important opportunities for your health care provider to check that your baby is growing and that you both are staying healthy. If you live in a rural or remote community and have limited access to maternity care, you may need to travel to see a health care provider for an ultrasound or other appointment. You may also need to travel when it's time for you to give birth, depending on the health care resources in your community.

The Health Benefits Program covers travel, including meals and accommodation, to see a health care provider outside your community for prenatal appointments, as well as when it is time for you to give birth. Health Benefits may also cover travel for one person to accompany you. Talk to your health care provider if you have questions about when to have your prenatal checkups.

Prenatal Vitamins

Your nutritional health is an important part of keeping you and your baby healthy. It is best to start taking folic acid two to three months before getting pregnant and continue to take it during your pregnancy. Eating well and taking prenatal vitamins can help support the healthy development of your baby. It is also a good idea to keep taking your prenatal vitamins after you give birth.

The Health Benefits Program covers prenatal vitamins, iron, and folic acid to support you in having a healthy pregnancy. Talk to your health care provider if you have questions about how exercise, nutrition and other lifestyle factors can help you to have a healthy pregnancy.

Oral Health

Oral hygiene and dental check-ups are an important part of your care during pregnancy. Preventing and treating tooth decay and infections in your mouth can help the development and oral health of your baby. Research shows there may be a link between dental diseases and having a pre-term or low-birth weight baby. Eating a balanced diet and taking prenatal vitamins also help with your baby's teeth development during your pregnancy. You may notice that changing hormones make your gums swell, bleed more easily, and feel irritated. It is a good idea to get regular dental check-ups during and after your pregnancy.

The Health Benefits Program covers your dental checkups, cleanings and many other dental treatments you may need. Talk to your oral health care provider if you have questions about your oral health and pregnancy.

Eyes and Vision

Regular vision exams are an important part of your overall wellness and self-care. Pregnancy can change your vision by causing blurry vision, headaches, and light sensitivity. Most vision changes during pregnancy are mild and temporary. Sometimes, vision blurriness, light sensitivity and/or headaches can be an indication of more serious health conditions. Contact your health care provider if you notice any of these vision changes.

The Health Benefits Program covers eye exams and other eye care-related services. Talk to your eye care provider if you have questions about your vision and pregnancy.

Alcohol, Cannabis, Commercial Tobacco, and Other Substance Use

Using illicit or prescription drugs, alcohol or commercial tobacco during pregnancy can cause short- and long-term health conditions for the person who is pregnant and the baby. After giving birth, substances can pass to the baby when breastfeeding, and second-hand smoke can harm the baby.

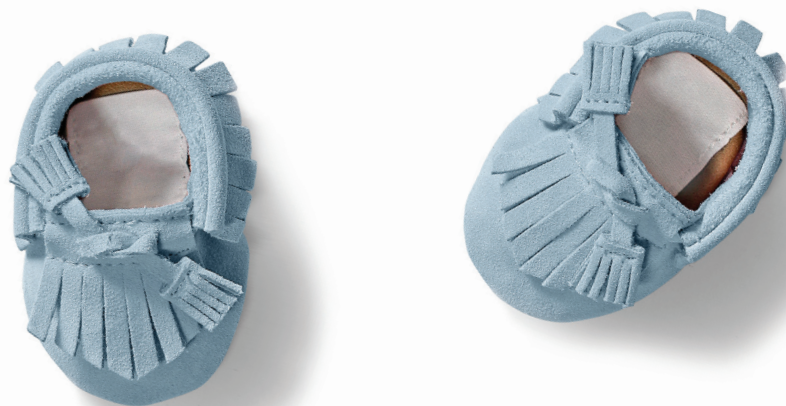
If this is a concern for you, bringing a baby into the world can be an opportunity to think about your and your baby's wellness. What are ways you and your family can plan for a healthy pregnancy and welcome your new baby into the world?

The Health Benefits Program covers products to help you reduce or quit smoking commercial tobacco, if you decide that is right for you. Overcoming regular use of commercial tobacco or nicotine can be hard, and you may need extra support, including wholistic supports such as counselling or traditional healing. Talk to your health care provider about the options available to you and where to get help.

Health Benefits also covers medications prescribed to treat substance use. Many medications can impact a baby's development, so it is important to talk to your health care provider about the best option for you. If you decide a treatment centre would help you with substance use, Health Benefits can help cover the travel to some centres. It is a good idea to double-check if the centre admits people who are actively using substances or taking medication for substance use, and if they will admit people who are pregnant.

If you would like to access an addictions and psychiatry specialist, you can ask your health and wellness provider for a referral to the First Nations Virtual Substance Use and Psychiatry Service. This is a free service of the FNHA that you can access by phone or video conference with your provider. Specialists offer treatment support that is culturally safe and trauma informed.

Talk to your health care provider if you have questions about commercial tobacco, alcohol, drugs, prescription and over-the-counter medications. If you use traditional medicines, let your health care provider know.



Mental Health

During pregnancy, hormonal and physical changes may affect your mental health. There may be times when you feel joy and excitement to meet your baby, and times when you feel sad, nervous, stressed or worried. You may experience these feelings before or after the baby is born. Sometimes partners experience these feelings as well. This is a very common experience and support is available to help you and your family.

The Health Benefits Program covers counselling sessions to support you in your mental health journey. Counselling can be a great place to talk about the feelings you are experiencing, and can offer comfort and tools to help you work through them. Coverage is also available for medication to treat anxiety, depression and other mental health concerns that may be recommended by your health care provider.

You are encouraged to talk to your mental health care provider, community health nurse, or other health care provider if you have questions about depression or other mental health concerns during pregnancy. Additional support programs and services are listed at the end of this guide.

Pregnancy Discomforts

Symptoms of discomfort due to pregnancy vary from person to person. You may experience nausea and vomiting, heartburn and indigestion, incontinence, constipation, migraines, head and back aches, swelling or other symptoms. If you use cannabis to help with nausea, consult with your health care provider. Cannabis is not recommended during pregnancy and there are other options available. It is also a good idea to talk with your health care provider before taking any over-the-counter medications. Your health care provider needs to know you are having these discomforts, as they can be a sign of a medical condition that occurs during pregnancy.

The Health Benefits Program covers many of the medications for pain relief, nausea and other stomach complaints. It also covers various incontinence supplies, as well as supplies like compression stockings and maternity belts that may help with back aches or bodily swelling. Talk to your health care provider if you have questions about how to treat common pregnancy discomforts.

Diabetes and Gestational Diabetes

It is important for your health—and the health of your growing baby—to be checked for diabetes. If you have never been tested for diabetes, it is a good idea to get tested before getting pregnant or at your first prenatal appointment. This can usually be done with your family doctor, primary care provider, or community health nurse. In the early stages of diabetes a person may not feel different or have symptoms, so getting tested is the best way to know.

During pregnancy, some people develop a form of diabetes called gestational diabetes. A test for gestational diabetes will occur between 24 and 28 weeks into your pregnancy. People who develop gestational diabetes will need to monitor their blood sugar levels, and may need to take diabetes medication or insulin. Gestational diabetes will go away after you give birth, but it does increase your risk for having diabetes later in life. You will need to go for follow-up screening, usually between six weeks and six months after your baby is born. After that, it is recommended that you go for annual screening.

The Health Benefits Program covers a variety of diabetes medication and supplies, including blood glucose test strips and insulin. Talk to your health care provider if you have questions about diabetes or gestational diabetes.



Your Coverage After Giving Birth

Feeding

Breastfeeding has many benefits for you and your baby. Breastmilk is safe, clean, and contains antibodies to protect your baby against common childhood illnesses. It has the energy and nutrients your baby needs for growth and development.

The Health Benefits Program covers some of the items you may need to help you breastfeed your baby such as manual breast pumps, electric breast pumps, and nipple shields. Talk to your health care provider if you have questions about breastfeeding.

Vitamin Supplements and Medication

Once you give birth, you may have questions about how to take care of your baby and what to do if your baby doesn't feel well. It is recommended that all babies who are breastfeeding receive supplemental vitamin D. If your baby gets sick, make sure you talk to your health care provider before giving your baby any medications for pain or fever. Babies and children should never be given ASA products (Aspirin), unless on the advice of a doctor.

The Health Benefits Program covers some of the items you may need to care for your baby such as infant vitamin D drops and generic brand "baby Tylenol." Talk to your health care provider if you have questions about any health concerns affecting your baby.

Your Baby's Oral Health

Even before your baby starts teething you can start taking care of their oral health. You can use a damp washcloth or an infant-sized toothbrush to clean your baby's gums daily. Once the first tooth comes in, brush your baby's teeth twice a day with a bit of toothpaste the size of a grain of rice. It is recommended to take your baby to the dentist or another oral health care provider within six months of your baby's first tooth.

The Health Benefits Program covers your baby's dental checkups, cleanings and many other dental treatments your baby may need. Talk to your oral health care provider if you have questions about how to care for your baby's oral health.

Contraceptives

It is helpful to explore what contraceptive options might work best for you to support safe and positive sex and your family planning needs.

The Health Benefits Program covers various prescription contraceptives, such as contraceptive pills, patches, rings, shots, and intrauterine devices (IUDs), to help support you in your family planning decisions. Health Benefits also covers emergency contraceptive medication. Talk to your health care provider if you have questions about family planning.

Your Baby's Health Care Coverage

Your baby will need individual health care coverage through the BC Medical Services Plan (MSP) and FNHA's Health Benefits Program.

Follow these steps to set up your baby's account:

1. Register your baby for a Personal Health Number (PHN) to access MSP.
2. Register your baby for a status number, either through Indigenous Services Canada or your local band office. You will need the personal information and signature of both parents on your baby's status number application.
3. Once you have your baby's PHN and status number, call Health Benefits at **1-855-550-5454**.

It is best to begin the registration process early, as it can take several months for registrations to be processed. Your baby will be covered under your or your partner's status number until 24 months of age. If you are having trouble getting an item or service covered for your baby, call Health Benefits.



How to Access Your Pregnancy and Baby Care Benefits Coverage

The Health Benefits Program can support you by covering many of the medically-necessary items and services your health care provider might recommend. Some items or services need a prescription, a written recommendation from your health provider, or approval from Health Benefits to be covered.

First Nations Health Benefits has partnered with Pacific Blue Cross (PBC) to administer dental, vision and medical supplies & equipment (MS&E) benefits. Providers who are registered with PBC can bill your plan directly for these services.

PBC is a BC-based organization and is dedicated to the principles and practices of cultural safety and humility.

How to Create a PBC Member Profile

You can use your status number to create a free PBC Member Profile to:

- Check your benefits coverage and amounts
- Submit a claim for reimbursement online (if you paid up front for a service covered by your plan)
- Search for vision care providers who offer direct billing

PBC reimburses online claims in as little as 48 hours.

Visit pac.bluecross.ca/fnhaclient and click on “I want to Register for Access to my Member Profile.” Follow the steps to set up your profile and password.

PACIFIC BLUE CROSS

Login [Back →](#)

Status Card / ID Number

Password

LOGIN

Need help logging in?

[I forgot my password.](#) →

[I want to Register for Access to my Member Profile.](#) →

Pacific Blue Cross houses and maintains our Members' data using Canadian-located systems, so you can take comfort in knowing your health information is stored right here in Canada.

Not logging in as a Member?

[Plan Administrator](#) →

[Plan Advisor](#) →

[Service Provider](#) →

You can also download the PBC app at pac.bluecross.ca/mobile, Google Play or the Apple App Store.



Health Benefits covers the following items and services you may need during and after your pregnancy:

ITEM OR SERVICE	HOW TO ACCESS COVERAGE
Manual Breast Pumps, Electric Breast Pumps, Nipple Shields, Compression Stockings, Maternity Belts	Take your prescription or written recommendation from your health care provider to the pharmacy or medical supply store. They can bill the benefits plan directly so you don't pay up front for the item.
Counselling	Make an appointment with a mental health provider who is registered with Health Benefits. The provider can bill your plan directly for your sessions.
Dental Appointments Eye Exams	The FNHA dental and vision plans are administered by Health Benefits partner Pacific Blue Cross. Book an appointment with a dental or vision care provider who can bill Pacific Blue Cross directly. Or, pay up front and submit a receipt for reimbursement.
Travel to appointments outside of your community	You will need to give your community's patient travel clerk or the Health Benefits office written confirmation that you have an appointment. The clerk or Health Benefits will make your travel arrangements for you. When you return you will need to give the clerk or Health Benefits written confirmation from your health care provider that you attended the appointment.
Travel to give birth outside of your community	You will need to give your community's patient travel clerk or the Health Benefits office a note from your health care provider that states your due date and the reason you need to travel to give birth. Some communities also have a form you will need to submit. The clerk or Health Benefits will make your travel arrangements for you.
Travel for one person to accompany you to appointments or to give birth outside of your community	You will need to submit your community's "Escort Request Form" to your community's patient travel clerk or the Health Benefits office. You will need approval for someone to accompany you. The clerk or Health Benefits will make your travel arrangements.
Travel to a National Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program (NNADAP) treatment centre	You will need to give your community's patient travel clerk or the Health Benefits office written confirmation that you have been accepted to a centre. The clerk or Health Benefits will make your travel arrangements for you.

Coverage for Medications or Pharmacy Items

Health Benefits covers a variety of medications and medical supplies that your health care provider may recommend. Some medications require a prescription, and some medications can be directly provided by your pharmacist without a prescription. There are also some medications that require special approval before Health Benefits can provide coverage. Call Health Benefits if you have questions about how to access coverage for a medication or pharmacy item.

Some medications or pharmacy items you may need during your pregnancy and after, which Health Benefits covers include:

- Prenatal vitamins
- Iron
- Folic acid
- Medication for pain relief or fever
- Medication for nausea and other digestive complaints
- Diabetes medication
- Insulin and diabetes supplies
- Infant vitamin D drops
- Baby Tylenol (generic brand)
- Contraceptive pills
- Contraceptive patches
- Contraceptive vaginal rings
- Contraceptive shots
- Contraceptive intrauterine devices (IUDs)
- Products to help quit commercial tobacco
- Medications for problematic substance use
- Naloxone
- And many others



If you have questions about what your benefits plan covers, or how to access coverage for you or your baby, call Health Benefits at **1-855-550-5454** or visit fnha.ca/benefits

Pregnancy and Baby Care Resources

FNHA VIRTUAL HEALTH SERVICES

Connect with a doctor or specialist by phone or video. These services are available to all First Nations people living in BC and their family members, including family members who are not Indigenous. Doctors and staff are dedicated to the principles and practices of cultural safety and humility, and trauma-informed care. Learn more at: fnha.ca/virtualhealth

Mothers and Babies Advice Line

- If you live in a rural or remote community, contact this service to talk to a doctor who specializes in maternal and child health
- Your community health nurse or other health care provider such as a doula or counselor, can help you to set up an appointment
- Doctors can provide advice on urgent and non-urgent topics
- Service hours are 24 hours a day, seven days a week
- For more information visit: fnha.ca/what-we-do/ehealth/maternity-and-babies-advice-line

First Nations Virtual Doctor of the Day

- Call to book a virtual appointment with a family practice doctor if you do not have one of your own or have lost access to your usual doctor
- Service hours are seven days a week from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
- Call 1-855-344-3800

First Nations Virtual Substance Use and Psychiatry Service

- This service provides virtual access to specialists in mental health and addictions medicine to support your wellbeing
- Ask a trusted health and wellness provider to refer you to the program
- Your health and wellness provider will attend the appointment with you and help to ensure you have the right continuing supports for your care
- If you do not have a provider, call the First Nations Virtual Doctor of the Day for a referral

MENTAL HEALTH

Mental Health Counselling

- FNHA Health Benefits covers mental health counselling from registered providers
- Many counsellors can offer virtual sessions
- Call 1-855-550-5454 or visit fnha.ca/benefits/mentalhealth for help to find a counsellor

Pacific Post-Partum Support Society

- The Society provides free or low-cost programs for mothers experiencing a difficult pregnancy, postpartum depression or anxiety
- Call or text 604-255-7999, call toll-free 855-255-7999 or visit postpartum.org

BC Reproductive Mental Health Program

- This is a program of BC Women's Hospital. It provides support for women who are pregnant, postpartum, or coping with pregnancy loss or infertility: reproductivementalhealth.ca

The KUU-US Crisis Line Society

- This provincial, Indigenous crisis line provides mental health support 24 hours a day, seven days a week
- Adults/Elders call: 250-723-4050
Child/Youth call: 250-723-2040
Toll Free call: 1-800-588-8717

SUBSTANCE USE

- BC Smoking Cessation Program.
Call 1-877-455-2233 or visit QuitNow.ca
- For more information about respecting tobacco visit: FNHA.ca/respectingtobacco

Substance Use Treatment Centres

- The National Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program (NNADAP) funds several treatment centres and an outpatient centre in BC
- The First Nations Virtual Substance Use and Psychiatry Service can also help you to access treatment
- View a list of centres at fnha.ca/what-we-do/mental-wellness-and-substance-use/treatment-centres

HEALTHY PREGNANCY

Our Sacred Journey:

Aboriginal Pregnancy Passport

- This passport helps you to keep track of your sacred journey through pregnancy, birth and baby's early weeks: fnha.ca/WellnessSite/WellnessDocuments/AboriginalPregnancyPassport.pdf

Doulas for Aboriginal Families Grant Program

- This program offers funding to cover the costs of a birth doula and postpartum doula for pregnant Indigenous mothers and families living in BC (on and off reserve)
- Call 1-800-990-2432 or 250-388-5522

- To find a doula, contact the Doula Services Association's Referral Line at 1-877-365-5588, email doulasupport@bcaafc.com or visit: bcaafc.com/programs/doula-support

HealthLink BC (BC Nurses Hotline)

- Registered nurses can help you with non-emergency health concerns, discuss symptoms and procedures, and advise if you should see a health care provider in person
- Hours of Operation: 24 hours a day, seven days a week
- Call 811 or 604-215-8110

SmartMom

- SmartMom's free text messaging service sends you information timed to your stage of pregnancy to support you to achieve a healthy pregnancy and birth
- This BC-based program was created in consultation with pregnant women, new mothers, practicing nurses, doctors, midwives and experts in environmental health and nutrition
- Call toll-free 1-855-871-2229 or visit: smartmomcanada.ca

Healthy Families BC

- Healthy Families BC offers many resources on ways to stay healthy during and after pregnancy.
- Visit healthyfamiliesbc.ca for more information.

GUIDE TO PREGNANCY, BIRTH AND NEWBORN CARE

- Baby's Best Chance is a reference guide covers topics on pregnancy, birth and parenting a baby up to six months of age: health.gov.bc.ca/library/publications/year/2019/BBC-7th-edition-FINAL-Nov2019.pdf

Pregnancy and Baby Care Resources continued

BABY AND CHILD HEALTH RESOURCES

Honouring Our Babies: Safe Sleep Guidelines

- The FNHA wellness site offers teachings on how to protect babies and help them sleep safely: fnha.ca/wellness/wellness-for-first-nations/women-men-children-and-families

First Nations Children's Oral Health Initiative

- This FNHA program offers tips and guides to promote oral health in pregnancy and early childhood: fnha.ca/what-we-do/maternal-child-and-family-health/childrens-oral-health-initiative

Indigenous Family and Parenting Resources

- The FNHA offers four resource booklets about healthy children for First Nations and Métis parents in BC
- Booklets include shared knowledge, stories, teachings, ideas and photos:
 - Family Connections: fnha.ca/Documents/familyconnections.pdf
 - Growing Up Healthy: fnha.ca/Documents/growingup.pdf
 - Parents as First Teachers: fnha.ca/Documents/parentteacher.pdf
 - Fatherhood is Forever: fnha.ca/WellnessSite/WellnessDocuments/fatherhood-is-forever.pdf

A Guide to Your Baby's First Foods

- This FNHA guide can help you to know when to introduce foods to a baby's diet. It includes many recipes: fnha.ca/WellnessSite/WellnessDocuments/FNHA-A-Guide-to-Your-Babys-First-Foods.pdf

Jordan's Principle

- This is a child-first principle ensuring First Nations children get the services they need when they need them.
- Call toll-free 1-866-913-0033 or visit: jordansprinciple.ca

STATUS NUMBER AND MEDICAL SERVICES PLAN (MSP) REGISTRATION

Status Number Registration

- Register your baby for a status number with Indigenous Services Canada: sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1100100032475/1572459510512
- If you have questions about your application or how to apply, call 1-800-567-9604

BC Birth Registration

- Register your baby for a Social Insurance Number, Personal Health Number for MSP, and Canada Child Benefit: www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/life-events/birth-adoption/births

CONTRACEPTION AND SEXUAL HEALTH RESOURCES

- Contraceptive Options: sexandu.ca/contraception/
- Options for Sexual Health: optionsforsexualhealth.org/
- Reproductive and sexual health services: willowclinic.ca/

YOUR SAFETY AND WELLNESS

- Abuse can be physical, emotional, psychological, or sexual in nature. Help is available for you or your loved ones.
- For more information visit: endingviolence.org or www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/public-safety/domestic-violence





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