FREE GUIDE · BY A DOCTOR IN JAPAN

Pregnant in Japan

Your first 5 steps, 12 surprises, and when to call the hospital.



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Board-certified OB/GYN in Japan · November 2026

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Pregnant in Japan? Your first 5 steps

In this order. Each one unlocks the next.

1 About 5 to 8 weeks

See a women's clinic

An 産婦人科 (さんふじんか) confirms the pregnancy with a scan. Health insurance (健康保険 (けんこうほけん)) doesn't cover this visit, so bring cash or a card. If they give you a note for city hall (市役所・区役所 (しやくしょ・くやくしょ)), keep it.

2 About 8 to 11 weeks

Report the pregnancy at city hall

File a pregnancy notification, 妊娠届 (にんしんとどけ). Bring your residence card (在留カード (ざいりゅうカード)) and your My Number card. Some cities want your health insurance card too.

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Step 2, continued

What city hall (市役所・区役所) gives you

- **The Boshi Techo** (母子手帳): your pregnancy and baby record book. Bring it to every checkup.
- **14 checkup vouchers** (受診券・助成券). They pay a set amount of each checkup, so you usually still pay a little.
- **¥50,000** support payment, and another ¥50,000 at about 32 weeks.

3

By about 12 weeks

Book where you'll give birth

Hospitals take only so many births a month, and popular ones fill early. Want an epidural (painless birth)? Ask before you book.

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Every 2 to 4 weeks, then weekly

Go to every checkup

About 14 visits. Bring your Boshi Techo (母子手帳) and one voucher (受診券・助成券) each time. Checkups are short, so write your questions down before you go.

5

Today

Save the hospital's phone number

In Japan you phone the maternity ward first, day or night, before you go in. A midwife (助産師) answers and tells you whether to come.

Keep this guide

Next: the 12 things that surprise people in Japan, and when to call.

What surprises people in Japan



You book the birth months ahead

Book by about 12 weeks, or the hospital you want may be full.



Epidurals are less common

About 1 in 7 births (無痛分娩(むつうぶんべん)). Often only on planned days, and not covered by insurance.



A normal birth isn't insured

Insurance pays a ¥500,000 grant (出産育児一時金(しゅっさんいくじいちじきん)) instead. You pay the difference, often ¥0 to ¥150,000.



Short checkups, many scans

About 14 visits, mostly paid by city vouchers (受診券・助成券(じゅしんけん・じょせいけん)). Most take a few minutes and include an ultrasound (scan).



Your weight is watched closely

You may hear firm comments about weight gain. Ask what your target is.



Phone before you go in

Day or night, a midwife (助産師(じょさんし)) on the phone decides when you come in. Never just turn up.



About 5 days in hospital

Longer than in most countries, with strict visiting rules. Partners may not be allowed in for a C-section (帝王切開(ていおうせっかい)).



Common medicines to avoid

Loxonin and pain patches (湿布(しっぷ)) are in every home. Avoid them from mid-pregnancy.



Deadlines start at birth

Register the birth within 14 days, and claim child allowance (児童手当 じどうてあて) within 15 days. Late means lost money.



Your baby isn't automatically Japanese

A baby with no Japanese parent needs residence status within 30 days, and a passport from your country.



Almost everything is in Japanese

Classes, forms, the hospital folder. English help exists, but you have to ask for it.



Family help works differently

Japanese mothers often stay at their parents' home after the birth. If yours are abroad, plan help early.

TAKE A SCREENSHOT OF THIS PAGE

When to call the hospital

Call right now

Can't reach them? Call 119.

- Bleeding like a period or more, or bright red blood that keeps coming
- Your water breaks (破水(はすい)), or you think it might have, at any week
- Belly pain that doesn't stop, or a belly that stays hard
- The baby is moving much less than usual, or not at all
- A bad headache, changes in your vision, a seizure, chest pain or trouble breathing

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Call today

- Fever of 38°C or higher
- Before 37 weeks: regular tightening of the belly, or a "show" (pink or brown mucus)
- Sudden swelling, or blood pressure 140/90 or higher at home
- Pain when you pee, or vomiting that won't stop

Have this ready when you call

- Your name and patient number
- How many weeks pregnant you are
- What's happening, and since when
- Any bleeding, water, or less movement

Not sure if it's an emergency? Many areas have #7119 for medical advice (in Japanese; ask for an interpreter). For an emergency, call 119. English interpreting is available.

THE WHOLE PREGNANCY

Your jobs, week by week

Weeks of pregnancy ↓

5 to 8 wks
First clinic visit

8 to 11 wks
City hall (市役所(しやくしょ)・区役所(くやくしょ)): Boshi Techo (母子手帳(ぼしてちょう)), vouchers (受診券(じゅしんけん)・助成券(じょせいけん)), first ¥50,000

By 12 wks
Book where you'll give birth

10 to 16 wks
Optional tests for the baby (出生前診断(しゅっせいぜんしんだん)), only if you want them

About 32 wks
City hall: second ¥50,000

By 36 wks
Hospital bag packed, taxi number saved

37 to 41 wks
The birth, then about 5 days in hospital

Within 14 days
Register the birth at city hall

WHEN A GUIDE ISN'T ENOUGH

Worried between checkups? A doctor's answer in 24 hours.*

Due in Japan: send your question on LINE. A board-certified Japanese OB/GYN replies in plain English.

*As a rule. If a reply will be late, you'll be told in the chat.

- ✓ Know what's usual, and what to ask at your checkup
- ✓ Get a short note in Japanese to show your doctor
- ✓ Help with the Japanese system: forms, city hall (市役所 (しやくしょ)・区役所 (くやくしょ)), the hospital

WHAT IT IS NOT

✕ NOT a diagnosis or a prescription
✕ NOT a replacement for your own doctor

Emergency? Call your hospital or 119 now.

COMING SOON

The full guide, and Due in Japan

This free guide is a short version. The full guide (44 pages) covers:

- City hall (市役所 (しやくしょ)・区役所 (くやくしょ)), the Boshi Techo (母子手帳 (ぼしてちょう)), how to read your checkup record
- Choosing a hospital, epidurals (無痛分娩 (むつうぶんべん)), what a birth costs
- Food, medicine, work, travel
- The birth, the hospital stay, the first month
- Every form, deadline and payment
- Japanese phrases for the hospital

Want to hear first when they open?

DM "DUE" to @albert.japan
on Instagram