



# Childhood in Geneva

Have you just arrived in Geneva and are a beneficiary of the Hospice général? Do you have questions about your role as parent, or about the activities available for your child?

This document provides you with answers to the following questions.

- 1. Childbirth in Geneva: how to prepare for your baby's arrival?
- 2. Baby's first years: what parent and child groups exist for pre-school children?
- 3. Having a child at school: what support structures exist at school?
- 4. Being a parent: find out important information about your child's education
- 5. Hobbies/activities: what can you do with your child?
- 6. What is the legal framework in Switzerland?





## 1. Childbirth in Geneva: how to prepare for your baby's arrival

You have just arrived in Geneva and you are pregnant:

You will be monitored and examined regularly by your gynecologist at their private offices or clinics or in the Maternity department of the University Hospital of Geneva (HUG) to check that your pregnancy is proceeding smoothly.

**To benefit from a support program during your pregnancy, you can also get in touch with:**

- **The Maternity department of University Hospital of Geneva (HUG):** Two appointments (in French) with a midwife are offered to support mothers-to-be (one meeting before the baby is born and one afterwards).
- **“Being pregnant in Geneva”:** Birth preparation classes for any pregnant woman who does not speak French (interpreted into your own language if necessary).
- **Arcade Sages-femmes:** There are several branches of Arcade Sages-femmes in Geneva. You can visit them to ask a question, have your baby weighed or obtain professional advice before and after your baby is born. A midwife will visit you at home, once you have left the Maternity department, to check that all is well with you and your baby.

### **How do you report your baby's birth to the Registry Office of the City of Geneva?**

After your baby is born, you have 3 days to officially report the birth to the Registry Office. The process can be undertaken from the Maternity department [registry office on the ground floor of the Maternity department of University Hospital of Geneva (HUG)].

**The Registry Office:** has the task of registering all significant events in a person's lifetime, from birth to death. It registers orders for identity cards, issues residence permits and certificates of address and produces certificates relating to life events such as birth, marriage and death certificates.

**Allowance paid when a baby is born:** an allowance paid when the baby is born (one-off payment) + an allowance for children aged under two (paid monthly) is provided by the Hospice général.

**Where to get a pushchair:** Renfile, Centre Social Protestant, Emmaus Genève, Arcade Sages-femmes.

**Where to find low-priced children's clothing:** Vestiaire CSP, Caritas Vet'Shop, Arcade Sages-femmes.

## 2. Baby's first years: what parent and child groups are available for pre-school children?

Free groups exist throughout the canton for parents and their children (from birth to four years). Attending these groups is essential for your child's development, socialization and to aid integration. Your child will also gain some knowledge of French before starting school.

Places and services providing childcare:

**Coccinelles:** Childcare facilities exist at the various Hospice général collective living centers. These facilities are managed by parents, volunteers and professionals who provide quality care.

**Nurseries:** Nurseries and early learning centers offer **regular childcare for children aged between sixteen weeks and four years**, in a dedicated area where early years professionals offer recreational and



educational activities encouraging child development and socialization as well as helping children learn French. The child can attend **either part-time or full-time**. Please note that these services have to be paid for.

**Kindergarten:** A kindergarten is a place where children learn to socialize and which they are expected to attend regularly. Its main objective is to teach children aged from two to four to live and play together. They attend for a half day or, less frequently, the whole day, but they cannot have lunch on site. Please note that these services have to be paid for.

**Child minders:** Child minders offer an alternative to nursery. This means that the child is looked after at the home of the child minder, who can care for one to five children aged from birth to twelve years, five days a week, for a maximum of ten hours a day. Please note that these services have to be paid for.

**Various associations** also offer parent and child groups helping children aged from birth to five to learn to socialize. You will find the addresses of these various places in the brochure "*Lieux d'accueil, de socialisation et d'intégration pour parents et enfants en âge pré-scolaire (0 à 4 ans)*" ["Parent and child groups helping pre-school children (from birth to four years) to learn to socialize and integrate"], published by the BIE. These addresses are also available on the Bonjour Genève website.

**Be careful! You need the agreement of your social worker to obtain payment of your childcare costs.**

Educational and information programs:

**Petits Pas:** meetings at home can be arranged for parents of children aged two years and above. The aim is to stimulate the child and help the child with their learning. The service is free and is provided for a maximum of eighteen months.

**Action Préventive en Milieu Familial (APMF):** Where there are difficulties with a child, APMF offers support with education through home visits. The service is free.

**Bientôt à l'école:** Introductory sessions between professionals and parents, arranged by the *Bureau de l'intégration des étrangers* (BIE), municipalities, the Hospice général and the Département de l'Instruction Publique, to introduce parents to the school and prepare children for when they start school. Meeting areas for adults and childcare are provided. The service is free.

### 3. Having a child at school: what support structures exist at school?

If your child is already at school, here is some information which may be useful:

In Geneva, children attending school can be looked after by GIAP (*Groupement Intercommunal pour l'Animation Parascolaire*) during lunchtimes and after school, from 4pm to 8pm.

**Be careful!** You need the agreement of your social worker to obtain payment of GIAP costs.

**Lessons in your own language and culture of origin:** To enable your child to continue to make progress in their mother tongue, the school will provide parents with a list of associations providing lessons for school children in their language of origin. Please note that these services must be paid for. Help can be arranged.



**L'école des parents:** a place providing information and support open to all non-French-speaking parents with children attending school. These services must be paid for. Help can be arranged.

### Help with homework

The volunteers with Croix-Rouge Jeunesse offer homework help sessions, often held on Tuesdays, to primary school children and unaccompanied minors living in collective living centers for asylum seekers (except during school holidays).

**Reliance:** offers educational support for children living exclusively in the municipalities of Onex, Confignon, Lancy or Vernier.

**Villa Yoyo:** homework help for children aged from four to twelve on Wednesdays and Saturdays.

**La Courte Echelle:** This project puts an adult and child in contact, in a “buddy” arrangement.

**Ara/Ajeta:** individual support lessons for pupils and apprentices having educational difficulties. These lessons are given by students who are still at college. Please note that these services must be paid for. Help can be arranged.

**Be careful! You need the agreement of your social worker to obtain payment of the costs.**

## 4. Being a parent: find out important information about your child's education and health.

Being a parent isn't always easy! Which is why there are many organizations providing advice services, specific help and individual support. In serious cases, child protection measures may be set up while working with the parents or at a court's decision through the Service de Protection des Mineurs (SPMI).

Never remain alone when facing a complicated situation! Get in touch with your support worker!

## 5. Hobbies/activities: what can you do with your child?

There are many places in Geneva offering hobbies and activities for children outside school, many of which are free.

When services have to be paid for, the Hospice général may be able to make a contribution, notably through supplementary allowances. Contact your support worker.

**Extra-curricular activities:** Playing a sport, making things, sewing, painting, learning a language, dance and so on offer many opportunities for our children, such as being active, creative and gaining confidence.

### Here are some useful contact details:

**GE DÉCOUVRE on Wednesdays:** Various classes for young people aged from four to sixteen, taking place on Wednesdays.



[Loisirsjeunes.ch](#): a website listing information on sports, artistic, cultural and recreational activities aimed at children and young people available during term time or school holidays in the canton of Geneva.

**Community centers**: All municipalities in Geneva have their own community center. Various activities take place there for both children and adults living in the local area.

**Recreation centers**: Numerous activities for children are available, as well as school holiday camps.

**Jardin Robinson**: Available in various municipalities, they offer a range of activities for children.

**Païdos/Atelier des Bricolos**: Various activities, events and camps for migrant children.

**Villa Yoyo**: Free activities for children aged from four to twelve on Wednesdays, Saturdays and during school holidays.

All links can be found on the “Bonjour Genève” website.

## 6. What is the legal framework in Switzerland?

**Children left alone**: You are strongly advised not to leave children at home alone.

**Taking children to school**: For safety reasons, parents are expected to take their children to school and to come and collect them at the end of the day, making sure they are on time.

**Going out**: Young people aged under sixteen are not allowed to be out in the evening after 10pm unless they are accompanied by an adult.

In Switzerland, **the age of majority is eighteen**. Parents are legally responsible for their children until they reach the age of majority. **The age of sexual consent is sixteen**.

**Forced marriage**: the Swiss criminal code prohibits forced marriage or any attempted forced marriage or partnership, which can result in a custodial sentence and a heavy fine.

**Cutting**: cutting and female genital mutilation are prohibited in Switzerland and can result in a custodial sentence and a heavy fine.

**Violence**: The prevention of violence is a key area of Swiss social policy and all acts of violence or vandalism will be punished, even if the perpetrator is a minor.

Alcohol and tobacco consumption is forbidden for those under the age of sixteen and **drug use** is completely prohibited.