



séparation

birth

marriage

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Family



We live together, but we do not want to get married. Is this possible?

Yes. In Belgium, many couples live together without being married. This is known as **informal cohabitation**. If you want to live together and benefit from couple's rights without getting married: there is also **legal cohabitation**. → For more information: contact your municipality.


We are a couple, and we want to get married. What do we do?

If you want to get married, you must meet four conditions:

- You must each be at least 18 years of age
- You must both agree to the marriage
- You must not be too closely related
- You must not be married to someone else

You must declare your desire to get married in the municipality where one of the two future spouses lives.

In Belgium, only **civil marriage**  is legally recognized.

 If the future spouses also want a religious wedding, the civil wedding must take place before the religious one.



If you are **civily married**  in another country, your marriage is, in principle, valid in Belgium as well.

→ For more information: contact your municipality.



What will our marriage change?

As spouses, you have **rights and duties** to each other. The law requires you to live together and to help each other. There are different marriage regimes with somewhat different rights and obligations.

→ For more information : www.notaire.be

Spouses are equal. They have the same rights and duties.

Marriage does not change anything about the individual freedoms of either spouse. Spouses have autonomy within the marriage, both in terms of their personal lives and their professional lives. Each spouse may, for example, practise the profession or trade of their own choice and maintain relations with their friends.



We do not get along anymore and we no longer want to live together. What do we do?

In case of major problems in a couple, you may decide to separate or divorce. Only divorce definitively ends the marriage.

In case of **separation**, you may ask the justice of the peace to define temporary measures relating to this separation (for your home, children, income, etc.).

→ Ask your municipality for the contact details for your canton's justice of the peace.

There are several types of **divorce** proceedings. Important questions must be ruled on during these proceedings, including custody of any children, child support and alimony payments between the ex-spouses.

→ For more information: www.notaire.be



A lawyer may help you.

→ You can also contact a family mediation service. See the "Information & Advice" chapter, "Legal Aid."






We are expecting a child. Is it important to see a doctor?

Yes. Right from the start of your pregnancy, it is important to obtain pre-natal care. This is important for the growth of your unborn child and for yourself. It gives you the opportunity to ask questions and get answers about pregnancy and childbirth.

Who should we see?

You can consult a **gynecologist** . Your general practitioner can refer you to one.

Throughout Wallonia and Brussels, ONE (Birth and Childhood Office) organizes pre-natal consultations, where you can see a general practitioner, a gynecologist or a midwife, free of charge.

→ To find a ONE center near you, please visit the website: www.one.be



→ In Brussels, you can also contact the Flemish equivalent of ONE: “Kind en gezin”: www.kindengezin.be



You can go to ONE even if you are an undocumented person.

What administrative formalities does the future mother have to complete during her pregnancy?

Tell your “mutuelle” that you are expecting a child. They will explain what you have to do. → See the “Health” chapter.

Labour law protects pregnant workers: they cannot be fired or exposed to high-risk working conditions during their pregnancy.



If you work, ask your physician for a pregnancy certificate, which you must present to your employer.

What do we have to do when our child is born?

When your child is born, the mother, the father or both must report the birth to the municipality where the child is born, within 15 days after the birth.



If you are an undocumented person, you must also do this.

If you are not married, the father must officially acknowledge paternity in the municipality where you live. You should do this before the birth, since the future mother must also be present. When paternity has been recognized, both the father and the mother can exercise parental authority, equally.

When you report the birth, you will receive a birth certificate. The birth certificate is an important document for the future of your child. It is important to keep it in a safe place.



If you are an undocumented person, your child will still receive a birth certificate.

Who else do we have to inform after the birth?



Do not forget to report the birth to your “mutuelle”. It will register your new-born child and will guide you through the next steps.

You may also be entitled to a new-born child bonus or a family allowance. Your “mutuelle” will tell you what you have to do.





Where can we get help if our baby is ill?

If your child is ill, you should go to a physician. → See the “Health” chapter.

Where can we get medical check-ups for our baby?

ONE organizes medical check-ups for children under the age of three. These allow you to monitor your child’s health and growth and to get vaccinations.



You can go to ONE even if you are an undocumented person.

Who can take care of our baby during the day?

If you are often gone during the day (because you work or are in school/training), you can have your baby (until age three) taken care of in a day-care center or by a babysitter. Starting at the age of 2 years 6 months, you can sign your child up for pre-school.

→ See the “Education” chapter.



The cost of subsidized day-care centers and babysitters varies depending on your income. There are also non-subsidized day-care centers and babysitters. Some of these are expensive. Find out and compare prices.

→ Ask ONE for the list of day-care centers and babysitters.



See glossary on page 67