

1. Benefits

Maternity insurance came into effect on April 1, 1954, and was one of the first 5 divisions to be covered by National Insurance Law. Maternity insurance grants the following benefits to new mothers:

Hospitalization Grant

The grant is intended to finance birth and hospitalization expenses for the mother and newborn; it is paid directly to the hospital. As of December 1993, a higher rate is paid for premature births. During the first 2 years after the National Health Law came into effect (in January 1995), the hospitalization of mothers and newborns, including premature newborns, was included in the basket of health services mandated by law, and was financed by the NII from funds collected for the maternity division. Since January 1997, the hospitalization grant has once again been paid directly to hospitals. When a birth takes place abroad, the grant is paid directly to the mother following submission of a claim.

The grant amount varies as follows:

- In January of each year, the amount is revised based on a formula defined by law, according to which the total payment for regular births and addition for premature ones, shall be equal to the total that would have been paid if there were no difference in the grant amount between regular and premature births.
- Whenever the Ministry of Health changes the cost of a general hospitalization day, the grant amount changes at the same rate.
- In accordance with the government's decision within the framework of the Economic Arrangements Law.

Travel to Hospital

Every woman giving birth is entitled to be taken to the hospital closest to her place of residence.

Birth Grant

The birth grant is intended for the initial purchase of supplies for the newborn. It is paid directly to the mother.

Maternity Allowance

The maternity allowance is designed to compensate mothers for the loss of salary during maternity leave that is taken in accordance with the Women's Employment Law. Working mothers – whether salaried, self-employed, or undergoing professional training – for whom insurance fees were paid during the time periods defined by law (**qualifying period**), preceding the birth, are entitled to a maternity allowance. It is paid for 7 or 14 weeks, depending on the qualifying period accrued by the mother.

It is possible to begin receiving the maternity allowance prior to the estimated date of birth, but not for more than half the entitled period. Under certain circumstances, it is possible to extend maternity leave by a maximum of 4 weeks. Since 1998, men who share the leave with their spouses are also entitled to a maternity allowance, on condition that the wife has returned to work. Income tax at source and national and health insurance fees are deducted from the maternity allowance.

Foreign workers are also entitled to a maternity allowance. However, in the Economic Arrangements Law, 2003, it was mandated that foreign workers without a legal permit are not entitled to a maternity allowance or maternity grant.

Childbirth Allowance

The childbirth allowance is paid for 20 months to a mother who has given birth to 3 or more live children at the same time, all of whom survived the time period mandated by law. The allowance is derived from the basic amount, and it is gradually reduced throughout the period of eligibility.

Risk Pregnancy Benefit

The risk pregnancy benefit is paid to a working woman who for medical reasons associated with the pregnancy had to stop working for at least 30 days and does not receive payment for these days from her employer or any other entity. The qualifying period for this benefit is the same as the period for the maternity allowance and the benefit amount can reach the full basic amount.

Special Pension and Special Benefit

A special pension and a special benefit is paid if the mother giving birth died during birth or within a year of the birth. The pension is paid each month for every newborn born

in that birth at 30% of the average wage for 24 months. If the child receives a survivors or dependents pension, the benefit is paid for only 12 months. The benefit is paid to the deceased's spouse if he stopped working to care for the child, at the injury allowance rate for up to 12 weeks. This pension is paid in about 10 cases each year.

2. Legislative Changes

Hospitalization Grant

In recent years the government changed the hospitalization grant amount within the framework of the Economic Arrangements Law. In 2005, it was increased for the birth of a premature baby by approximately 50%; in 2007 - it was increased for every birth by 12.1%; in 2009, the amount was further increased by approximately 10%; in 2012 by 0.2%; in 2013 by 10%; and in 2013 by an additional 3.87%. The government's intervention in setting the hospitalization grant amount is essentially a means to transfer budgets to hospitals by way of the NII.

Travel to Hospital Expenses

Since 2008, every woman giving birth is entitled to be taken to the hospital closest to her place of residence. Beforehand she was only entitled to be taken to hospital if she lived far from it.

Birth Grant

Until 2002, the birth grant was uniform and independent of the previous number of births - 20% of the average wage by law. In 2003, the amount changed from the 2nd child onwards - 6% of the average wage. In 2004, the amount was increased for the 2nd child only to 9% of the average wage. When 2 or more children are born in one birth, the birth grant is higher: for twins - an amount equal to the average wage, and for each additional child - another 50% of the average wage. Since 2006, the birth grant amount is calculated pursuant to the basic amount.

Maternity Allowance

Until May 2007, maternity allowances were paid for 6 or 12 weeks, depending on the qualifying period accrued by the mother. In June 2007, the law was amended, and the maternity allowance is now paid for 7 or 14 weeks. As of 1998, men who share the leave with their spouses are entitled to a maternity allowance, on condition that the woman

has returned to work. As of November 1994, the maternity allowance per day replaces the full average wage or income per day that the mother earned in the 3 months prior to stopping work (upon birth or beforehand), and not more than the maximum amount mandated by law.

Risk Pregnancy Benefit

Since the beginning of 1995, the risk pregnancy benefit amount is equal to the woman's average wage in the 3 months preceding cessation of work, and not more than 70% of the average wage. In 2000, the law was amended and the maximum amount for payment was changed to the full average wage (as of 2006, it is the full basic amount).

3. Main Trends

Birth and Hospitalization Grant

In 2015, **birth grants** were paid to approximately 177,000 mothers - an increase of 2.3% in comparison with 2014 (Table 1). The number of women of childbearing age (15-44) rose by 1.4% in comparison with 2014, such that the number of births per 1,000 women remained the same as it was in 2014 - 93. Approximately 53,000 births in 2015 were first births, approximately 48,000 were 2nd, and approximately 76,000 were 3rd or more births (Table 2). Approximately 4,000 were twin births, and about 90 were births of triplets or more. Among the **hospitalization grants** paid in the reviewed year, 2,891 were for premature births. This was 160 more than in 2014.

Table 1

Women Who Received Birth Grants and Maternity Allowances (Monthly Average, Absolute Numbers, and Percentages), 2011-2015

Year	Received Birth Grant		Received Maternity Allowance		
	Total – (Absolute Numbers)	Change From Previous Year (%)	Total - Absolute Numbers)	Change From Previous Year (%)	Percentage Of All Women Receiving Birth Grant (%)
2011	163,402	-1.8	105,740	2.3	64.7
2012	169,166	3.5	112,014	5.9	66.2
2013	169,711	0.3	114,383	2.1	67.4
2014	173,211	2.1	120,353	5.2	69.5
2015	177,117	2.3	123,827	2.9	69.9

Table 2
Live Births by Birth Order (Percentages), 2011-2015

Year	Total	First Birth	Second Birth	Third Birth	Fourth Or More Births
2011	100.0	29.6	27.4	19.7	23.3
2012	100.0	29.5	27.1	19.8	23.6
2013	100.0	29.7	27.4	19.7	23.2
2014	100.0	30.1	27.2	19.5	23.2
2015	100.0	30.1	27.1	19.5	23.3

Maternity Allowance

In 2015, approximately 124,000 women received a maternity allowance in comparison with approximately 120,000 in 2014 - an increase of 5.2%. The rate of those receiving maternity allowances of all those receiving birth grants decreased slightly in 2015 (Table 1), however it is still on the rise and reaches approximately 70%. The average age of women giving birth remained the same in 2015 in comparison with 2014 - 31.6. Approximately 95% of the women receiving a maternity allowance were salaried workers, while the rest - 5% - were self-employed, kibbutz or co-operative settlement members.

The distribution of women by maternity allowance amount per day indicates that in 2015 approximately a third of the women received an amount that did not exceed half of the average wage per day, and approximately one quarter received an allowance exceeding the average wage (Table 3). The rate of women receiving more than the average wage decreased, from 23.4% in 2014 to 23.0% in 2015, and the share of women receiving up to half of the average wage rose between the 2 years - from 33.7% to 33.9%. The distribution of women by amount of maternity allowance in comparison to average salary has remained similar over time.

Table 3
Women Receiving Maternity Allowances by Amount per Day, as a Percentage of Average Daily Wage (Absolute Numbers and Percentages), 2011-2015

Year	Total – (Absolute Numbers)	Up To 1/4 Of The Average Wage (%)	1/4-1/2 Average Wage (%)	1/2-3/4 Average Wage (%)	3/4 To Full Average Wage (%)	More Than Average Wage (%)
2011	105,740	7.4	24.8	26.4	16.9	24.5
2012	112,014	7.4	24.5	26.1	17.1	24.9
2013	114,383	8.2	25.0	26.0	17.0	23.8
2014	120,353	8.5	25.2	26.0	16.9	23.4
2015	123,827	8.6	25.3	26.2	16.9	23.0

Since the maternity allowance is the same as the mother's wage prior to birth, distribution by maternity allowance amount represents the wage distribution for these women. In 2015, the average wage among new mothers was NIS 7,365 per month, which is approximately 79% of the average wage – slightly lower than the rate in 2014 (NIS 7,301).

As with wages, the amount of maternity allowance changes in accordance with demographic and employment characteristics:

- The amount increases with the woman's age: Women up to age 24 received maternity allowances at a rate of approximately 45% of the average daily wage, while those aged 35 and over received allowances at a rate of 103% of the average wage. The average was 79% of the average wage (NIS 245 in 2015).
- Payments in the periphery were lower than those in the center of the country: In the Tel Aviv, Kfar Saba, and Ramat Gan branches, the average amount per day was the highest (115%, 111%, and 106% respectively of the average wage) while in Bnei Brak and Nazareth it was the lowest (61% and 59%, respectively).

The number of men receiving maternity allowances increased slightly – from 473 in 2014 to 494 in 2015, meaning a ratio of 4 men per 1,000 women. Between 2010 and 2014 there was a consistent rise in the number of men receiving the allowance, from 364 to 473. Between 2011 and 2015 there was a consistent rise in the number of men receiving the allowance, from 369 to 494.

4. Scope of Payments

In 2015, the scope of benefit payments in the maternity division increased by 5.2% at fixed prices in comparison with 2014. Approximately 93% were payments of hospitalization grants and maternity allowance (Table 4). The increase in total payments is mainly a result of a growth in the number of births, and an increase in hospitalization grant payments to hospitals. The share of the division's payments within all NII benefits increased from 8.9% to 9.0% between the 2 years, and has been trending upwards since 2006 (except for 2011).

Table 4
Payments for Maternity Benefits (Thousands of NIS, 2015 Prices), 2011-2015

Year	Total	Hospitalization Grant	Birth Grant	Maternity Allowance	Risk Pregnancy Benefit
2011	5,192,412	2,216,746	185,812	2,605,500	164,702
2012	5,556,371	2,379,215	192,286	2,788,313	180,960
2013	5,859,879	2,505,458	193,426	2,953,270	192,674
2014	6,222,910	2,690,683	201,279	3,107,729	206,454
2015	6,546,450	2,809,654	206,627	3,283,853	231,901