**Employment Insurance (EI) and maternity, parental and sickness benefits**

*For more information please call 1 800 206-7218 from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm and press "0" to speak to a representative or contact your local Service Canada Centre. Alternatively visit [http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/sc/ei/benefits/maternalparental.shtml](http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/sc/ei/benefits/maternalparental.shtml)*

**Who is eligible?**

To be entitled to maternity, parental or sickness benefits you must show that:

- your regular weekly earnings have been decreased by more than 40%; and
- you have accumulated 600 insured hours in the last 52 weeks or since your last claim. This period is called the **qualifying period**.

If you have been paid EI benefits in the past and you received a written notice, for example, a warning letter or a penalty letter, for making a false statement, the required number of hours worked to claim maternity, parental and sickness benefits will be higher.

**Qualifying period**

The qualifying period is the shorter of:

- the 52 week-period immediately before the start date of a claim, or
- the period since the start of a previous EI claim if that claim had started during the 52 week-period.

In certain situations, the qualifying period may be extended up to 104 weeks.

**How, where and when to apply**

To receive maternity, parental or sickness benefits you must submit an **EI application online** or in person to your **Service Canada Centre**. You should apply as soon as you stop working, even if you receive or will receive money when you become unemployed.

You must request your Record of Employment (ROE) from your last employer. If you have your ROE from your last employer, apply immediately. If you did not receive your last ROE, submit your application along with proof of employment — for example, pay stubs. If one or more ROE covering periods prior to your last employment are missing, you must still submit your claim for benefits.

At the same time you are applying for maternity benefits, you and your partner can also apply for parental benefits.

**How long can you receive maternity, parental or sickness benefits?**

A combination of maternity, parental and sickness benefits can be received up to a combined maximum of **50 weeks**.

You have received sickness benefits before or after your maternity benefits!

You could receive up to a maximum of 65 weeks of combined sickness, maternity and parental benefits instead of the normal combined maximum of 50 weeks. In order to be eligible for the increased number of weeks, the following conditions must be met **during**
your benefit period:

- you have not been paid regular or fishing benefits;
- you have been paid sickness, maternity and parental benefits; and
- you have been paid less than the maximum of 15 weeks of sickness benefits or less than 35 weeks of parental benefits.

**How much will you receive? (as of June 2006)**

The basic benefit rate is 55% of your average insured earnings up to a maximum amount of $413 per week. Your EI payment is a taxable income, meaning federal and provincial or territorial taxes, if it applies, will be deducted from your payment. You could receive a higher benefit rate if you are in a low-income family — net income up to a maximum of $25,921 per year — with children and you or your spouse receive the Canada Child Tax Benefit (CCTB), you are entitled to the Family Supplement.

**Maternity benefits**

Maternity benefits are payable to the birth mother or surrogate mother for a maximum of 15 weeks. To receive maternity benefits you are required to have worked for 600 hours in the last 52 weeks or since your last claim. The mother can start collecting maternity benefits either up to 8 weeks before she is expected to give birth or at the week she gives birth. Maternity benefits can be collected within 17 weeks of the actual or expected week of birth, whichever is later. Please note that the date you file your claim is very important in order for you to receive the maximum maternity benefits you are entitled to. If you are unsure about your most advantageous maternity period to receive maximum benefits, please talk to one of our service agents (see above). If the actual date of birth is different from the expected date of birth, it is very important that you provide this date as soon as possible after the birth of your child.

If your baby is hospitalized, then the 17 week limit can be extended for every week your child is in the hospital up to 52 weeks. You will still receive benefits for a maximum of 15 weeks, but payments can be delayed until your child comes home.

**Parental benefits**

Parental benefits are payable either to the biological or adoptive parents while they are caring for a newborn or an adopted child, up to a maximum of 35 weeks. To receive parental benefits you are required to have worked for 600 hours in the last 52 weeks or since your last claim.

Parental benefits can be claimed by one parent or shared between the two partners but will not exceed a combined maximum of 35 weeks. Parental benefits for biological parents and their partners are payable from the child’s birth date, and for adoptive parents and their partners from the date the child is placed with you.

When determining how you and your partner want to take advantage of your parental leave several choices can be made, here are some examples:

**Example 1**

You and your partner are sharing parental benefits, you can take the time together, the 35 weeks would be shared between the two of you.

**Example 2**

You may want to go back to work after your maternity leave is finished and let your partner take the full 35 weeks.
**Example 3**
You may only want to take a few weeks of parental benefits and then return to work, while your partner takes the remaining time choice.

**Example 4**
You may decide to go back to work after you have taken a couple of weeks of parental leave. Then, a few weeks later you realize you would like to be home with your child. You can still use the weeks of parental benefits you have left as long as the weeks you take do not exceed the 52 weeks since your child's birth or placement with you for adoption.