

Maternity guidance during coronavirus (COVID-19)

Updated 9 May 2022

We understand that this may be a worrying time for you but we want to reassure you that our entire maternity services team is here to support you during your pregnancy, labour and birth. All areas of maternity services are working hard to help protect you and your baby from the risk of coronavirus (COVID-19) so we have introduced a number of changes to our services to help support this. These changes will remain in place until further notice to keep you and our staff safe.

If you have any worries or concerns about your pregnancy, it is important that you continue to contact your community midwife or the maternity assessment unit. Please do not put off coming into hospital, it is important that we are able to support you and address any concerns you may have.

We are continuing to follow national guidance from the Government and from the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, Midwives and Anaesthetists – this guidance is changing regularly so please continue to check our website for updates.

Important information

If you have any concerns about your baby's movements, you think your waters have broken or if you have any concern about your pregnancy please contact the Maternity Assessment Unit who can help you.

It is important that you do not delay getting in touch if you have any concerns about your pregnancy.

Maternity Assessment Unit: 0191 282 5748

If you think you are in labour - wherever you plan to deliver – for all pregnancy and labour advice please contact:

- **Before 37 weeks** – please contact the Maternity Assessment Unit: 0191 282 5748
- **After 37 weeks** – please phone the labour line: 0191 282 6363

We understand that you may have concerns about visiting the hospital. However, please be assured that your safety is our first priority and all staff across maternity services are working hard to make sure you continue to receive outstanding care.

We are following local and national isolation guidance in relation to pregnant women with suspected and confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) and patients are treated in locations specific to their circumstances and conditions.

We ask that if you do come into hospital you continue to follow social distancing guidelines, wear a surgical mask and wash your hands or use hand gel regularly.

We are continuing to follow national guidance from the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, Midwives and Anaesthetists and the correct PPE guidance.

If you think you may have coronavirus (COVID-19)

If you think you have symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) or if you have had contact with anyone who has coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, and we need you to come into hospital, please let us know on the phone beforehand so we can handle your admission and passage through the hospital safely and keep other patients and our staff safe.

If you think you have symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) and you are due for a routine appointment either with the hospital or the community midwife, please call them directly and inform them so we can safely reschedule your care.

NHS advice can be found here <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/people-at-higher-risk/pregnancy-and-coronavirus/>

Vaccination and pregnancy

COVID-19 vaccination is recommended for all pregnant women as the best way to protect you and your baby against the associated risks during pregnancy. For the latest bite-sized advice on COVID-19 vaccination in pregnancy is available [here](#) and from the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists [here](#).

Pregnant women can receive their first two doses 8 weeks apart and are eligible for a booster dose, 12 weeks after their second dose. Pregnant women under our care and those who have just had a baby can now get their COVID-19 vaccination at a drop in clinic at the RVI's maternity department. Full details are available [here](#).

Changes to our services

Testing for coronavirus (COVID-19)

It is important that we ensure our maternity services remain safe so all our women and babies can be cared for in the safest environment. All patients and visitors will be asked if they have any symptoms of COVID-19 or if they have been in contact with someone who has recently

tested positive. Our team will discuss this with you when you arrive.

All Scans

One adult is welcome to attend all ultrasound scans with you. They must wear a face mask at all times.

We are not reducing the amount of routine antenatal scans at this time. You will still be offered a dating scan at around 12 weeks (usually between 11-14 weeks) and an anomaly scan at around 20 weeks (usually between 18-21 weeks).

If you have not received a date for your scan by post by 11 weeks for the dating scan or 19 weeks for the anomaly scan, please phone us on **0191 282 5845**.

There is the opportunity to purchase printed photos of your scan with contactless technology if you wish. Our scan appointments allow only enough time for a medical examination to take place, the results to be explained to you and the information recorded in your notes.

Ultrasounds are clinical investigations and it is important that our sonographer can concentrate on performing these investigations; so we cannot accommodate video calls or any other recordings during the scan.

Hospital appointments – updated 8 April 2022

One adult is welcome to attend all hospital appointments with you. They should wear a face mask at all times.

Community midwife appointments

Please contact your GP surgery for information about attending community midwife appointments accompanied. You must wear a mask to all community midwife appointments.

Antenatal ward – updated 9 May 2022

Your birth partner or support person can visit between 8am and 8pm each day. A second visitor and siblings are welcome to visit between 10am – 12noon and 3pm – 5pm. If you have more than two children, please speak to your midwife so that we can arrange their visit safely.

We understand that this is a special time for your family but ask that if your child is unwell, they do not come into the hospital environment.

All visitors, including children under 11 must wear a surgical face mask at remain within your bedspace at all times. Your visitors will be verbally screened for COVID-19 on arrival at

Maternity Reception, this information will be recorded and given to your visitor to present to a member of staff on arrival to the antenatal ward.

Antenatal classes

All of our antenatal classes have been postponed for the time being. We understand this is a disappointment to some people however it is the safest option at the moment in line with national social distancing guidelines.

Please speak to your midwife who can answer any concerns you have around the topics usually covered in antenatal classes.

Maternity tours

All tours of the maternity unit and Newcastle Birthing Centre are suspended. You can watch our virtual tour [here](#).

Home births

Newcastle Hospitals' maternity service continue to offer a home birth service. For more information please contact your community midwife.

Labour – updated 5 April 2022

When you come to hospital for assessment of labour, one birth partner is welcome to attend with you. If it is time to stay, a second birth partner is welcome to join you and will remain with you for all of your labour care. Your birthing partner(s) must stay in the room with you. Once your birthing partner(s) have arrived they must not swap with another person. If you have your baby on the delivery suite your birth partner(s) **will stay with you** until you are moved to the postnatal ward.

If you have your baby in the Newcastle Birthing Centre your birth partner(s) **must stay with you in your single birthing room**. Following the birth of your baby one of your birth partners is welcome to stay with you until you are discharged. If you have a second birth partner we will ask them to leave two hours after the birth of your baby.

Your birth partner(s) must wear a surgical face mask at all times while in the hospital. Your birth partner(s) will be asked if they have any symptoms of COVID-19 on arrival at reception, this information will be recorded and given to your birth partner(s) to present to a member of staff on arrival to Newcastle Birthing Centre or Delivery Suite.

Induction – updated 5 April 2022

When you come to hospital for induction of labour, one birth partner is welcome to attend with you. **They must stay in the bed space** with you and cannot swap with another person. Your birth partner will stay with you for all of your labour care. A second birth partner is welcome to join you when you are moved to your delivery room and will stay with you until you are moved to the postnatal ward.

Your birth partner(s) must wear a mask at all times while in the hospital. They will be asked if they have any symptoms of COVID-19 on arrival at reception, this information will be recorded and given to your birth partner(s) to present to a member of staff on arrival to delivery suite.

Unplanned Caesareans

If you require an unplanned caesarean section, one birth partner will be able to go with you to theatre as normal as long as you remain awake for the surgery. Your second birth partner must stay in your delivery room and where possible we will facilitate your second partner to briefly visit you in recovery following your caesarean. If you have a general anaesthetic, your birth partner(s) will not be able to accompany you to theatre – this is normal practice. One birth partner will be able to wait for you and your baby in the recovery area and where possible we will facilitate your second partner to briefly visit you following your caesarean.

When it is time to move to the postnatal ward, your birth partner will be asked to leave. Birth partners may walk you and your baby to the postnatal ward but will not be able to enter.

Planned Caesareans

When you come to hospital for a planned caesarean section, one birth partner is welcome to attend with you. **They must stay in the bed space** with you and cannot swap with another person. You will meet your medical team in the enhanced recovery area and wait there until you go to theatre.

If you are staying awake for the surgery, your birth partner can stay with you in theatre. If you will be having a general anaesthetic, your birth partner will not be able to stay in theatre – this is normal practice. They will be able to wait for you and your baby in the recovery area. After the surgery is complete, you, your baby and your birth partner will go into the recovery area to recover from the procedure and check all is well.

When it is time to move to enhanced recovery or the postnatal ward, your birth partner will be asked to leave. Birth partners may walk you and your baby to the postnatal ward but will not be able to enter.

Food

We continue to provide our patients three meals a day and snacks, sandwiches and cereal are available all day as well as hot and cold drinks.

We do not supply food for birth partners, so we advise that they prepare food and snacks to bring with them during labour.

Postnatal Wards – updated 9 May 2022

Your birth partner or support person can visit between 8am and 8pm each day. A second visitor and siblings are welcome to visit between 10am – 12noon and 3pm – 5pm. If you have more than two children, please speak to your midwife so that we can arrange their visit safely.

We understand that this is a special time for your family but ask that if your child is unwell, they do not come into the hospital environment.

All visitors, including children under 11 must wear a surgical face mask at remain within your bedspace at all times. Your visitors will be verbally screened for COVID-19 on arrival at Maternity Reception, this information will be recorded and given to your visitor to present to a member of staff on arrival to the antenatal ward.

Discharge from hospital following the birth of your baby

Discharge from hospital after the birth of your baby is currently no different than it was before the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic began.

Discharge from hospital can depend on a number of factors such as whether it is your first baby, how your baby was born, how your baby is feeding, if your baby is premature or small and if you have any other medical conditions. A six-hour discharge is available if you have a low risk birth.

If you experience a straight-forward caesarean section, you will usually be eligible for discharge around 24 hours after surgery. Those women who have more complex surgeries or births should expect a longer postnatal stay.

Your postnatal care will be developed around your specific medical needs. When your baby is born, you can discuss your discharge with your midwife, who will be able to give you an individualised timeframe for discharge.

When you leave hospital your community midwife will be informed of your return home.

Your community midwife will visit you on the day following discharge and further visits are arranged depending on your individual needs.

Visiting the Special Care Baby Unit (SCBU)

Both parents have 24 hours access together to their baby whilst on the Neonatal Unit. You must wear a surgical facemask at all times, and we will ask you if you have any symptoms of COVID-19 or have been in contact with someone who has recently tested positive.

Extended family or siblings cannot visit at this time.

There will be a very limited number of extenuating circumstances where these restrictions can be lifted but this will be at the discretion of the senior nurse in charge.

Staying in touch with your baby on the Special Care Baby Unit (SCBU)

We now use V-create to help parents stay in contact with their babies on SCBU. V-create is a secure video messaging service that lets staff record and send secure video updates and photos to parents when they are unable to be with their baby.

Thank you to Tiny Lives for their support in making this service available to parents.

Please speak to your baby's special care nurse for further information.

Women who test positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) and their babies

There has been a great amount of concern expressed regarding news from around the world that women who have tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) are being separated from their babies.

This is not the case at the RVI. We are following the recommendations of the RCOG and RCM, who do not recommend routine separation solely on the basis of being coronavirus (COVID-19) positive.

Breastfeeding is also still encouraged as the benefits outweigh any risks. We will advise you of any additional precautions you would need to take with your baby if you did test positive for coronavirus (COVID-19).

We ask that any women who have symptoms of, or are confirmed to have coronavirus (COVID-19) and need to come in to hospital inform us on the telephone before attending. This is so we can plan your admission to keep you, your baby, other patients and our staff safe.

Feeding your baby

There is a wealth of evidence that breastfeeding reduces the risk of babies developing infectious diseases. There is no evidence at this time that coronavirus (COVID-19) can be passed through breastmilk. Human milk and breastfeeding offer the baby protection and comfort and current evidence advises that the benefits of breastfeeding outweigh potential risks of not breastfeeding.

Breastfeeding support remains in place for those who need it on the Newcastle Birthing Centre, postnatal wards and in the community. The specialist breastfeeding clinic is still running although with less face-to-face contact. If you are having feeding problems ask your midwife to consider referring you for extra support.

Video conferencing for breastfeeding clinic appointments and breastfeeding classes will be launched soon: please ask your community midwife for more information. Those who are bottle feeding their baby must continue to follow strict hygiene procedures for sterilising and making up bottles. Please ensure that you wash your hands before doing so.

Formula milk is still available in shops although some stores limit this to two tins at a time. It is not anticipated that supplies will run out.

Stage 1/first infant formula should be used for infants in the first year of life:

- If parents are unable to get their usual brand of first infant formula, they can use any first infant formula as all preparations have a similar nutritional composition to comply with legislation.
- Do not use stage 2 follow-on formula for any baby under six months old: Use only first infant formula.
- If parents are using follow on formula for a baby older than six months old and cannot access this, then they can use first infant formula.
- If parents are using other milks such as anti-reflux milk or comfort milk, and can't access these, they can use first infant formula.
- Always make up infant formula as per the manufacturer's guidance and do not be tempted to add more water to the feed to make it last longer, as diluting the milk could endanger the baby's health.

If you have symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19), please think about whether you should wear a face mask while feeding your baby to reduce the risk of droplets passing from you to your baby. Your midwife will be able to guide you on this.

If parents/carers are infected, take precautions to limit the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) to the baby by:

- washing hands thoroughly before and after contact with the baby.
- routinely cleaning and disinfecting any surfaces touched.
- cleaning any infant feeding equipment, including breast pumps, bottles and teats thoroughly before and after use.
- practising respiratory hygiene, including during feeding, for example by avoiding coughing or sneezing on the baby and by wearing a face mask or suitable alternative if available.
- parents should take care to avoid falling asleep with their baby, see “Co-sleeping and SIDS: safer sleep for babies”.

The health visitor will be advised of your discharge to their care as normal.

Further information can be found regarding feeding your baby and coronavirus (COVID-19) [here](#).

Contact details

Community midwifery Services – 0191 282 5711
Maternity Assessment Unit - 0191 282 5748
Delivery Suite – 0191 282 5719
Newcastle Birthing Centre – 0191 282 4930
Postnatal care – 0191 282 5632