



The National Maternity Hospital

Coronavirus and Maternity Advice

We are still learning about coronavirus (COVID-19). We don't yet know how it affects pregnant women and their babies.

The NMH 4-Point Plan for patients concerned that they have COVID-19

If you are attending the hospital and are worried that you have an infection with COVID-19, please follow the below course of action:

- 1) Phone ahead (01 637 3100)
- 2) Do not travel on public transport
- 3) Phone again when you arrive outside the hospital and wait to be escorted to the area which has been prepared for your arrival
- 4) When we meet you we will give you a mask to wear and ask you to wash your hands or use an alcohol gel

Phone your GP for advice if you have any of the symptoms of coronavirus or if you are worried you might have been in direct contact with somebody with coronavirus.

Symptoms:

- a cough: this can be any kind of cough, not just dry
 - shortness of breath
 - breathing difficulties
 - fever (high temperature)
- Other symptoms are fatigue, headaches, sore throat, aches and pains.

High temperature during pregnancy: One of the symptoms of coronavirus is fever (high temperature). This can increase the risk of complications during the first trimester (week 0 to 13). If you have a high temperature and you are pregnant, phone your GP or midwife.

Protect yourself during pregnancy

When you are pregnant, your body naturally weakens your immune system. This is to help your pregnancy continue successfully. It means that when you are pregnant you may pick up infections more easily.

All pregnant women should get the flu vaccine. This will protect you and your baby from the flu, not from coronavirus.

If you need to be tested for the coronavirus and are awaiting a result of a coronavirus test, you will need to self-isolate. Please refer to the HSE website for guidelines on doing this.

Before birth

The team caring for you will involve you in all decisions.

There are extra precautions they will need to take before, during and after your baby's birth. Your obstetrician or midwife should talk to you about the safest way and time for your baby to be born.

Other expert doctors may also be involved in your care. These might include a doctor who specialises in infectious diseases and a neonatologist. This is a doctor who specialises in the care of newborn babies.

You may be in an isolation room with en-suite facilities during labour. You may need to stay in this room throughout your hospital stay.

During birth and labour

You will not have to wear a facemask during labour and birth. But you will need to wear a surgical mask when you're outside your room. Other than your doctor or midwife, only one other person may stay with you for the delivery. This could be a partner or family member. They will need to wear protective equipment to minimise the risk of infection.

After the birth

If you have coronavirus, the risk of your baby contracting the virus from you during pregnancy is low. The greatest risk of infection in babies are infective airborne droplets from someone infected with the virus. For this reason it is important to take precautions to prevent spread to your baby.

If you have coronavirus, your doctor or midwife will explain the risk to your baby and the plan for caring for your baby, after birth. This advice will depend on the severity of your symptoms and the results of any tests you have had. All babies born to mothers with confirmed coronavirus will be tested after birth and if they are well they can go home to await results.

Caring for your baby after birth

If you have coronavirus, one option is for your baby to be discharged home as soon as possible after birth so that someone else, such as an asymptomatic family member, can care for your baby while you recover. This is to protect your baby from catching the virus.

If you have coronavirus and are well, and wish to care for your baby in hospital, you and your baby will be isolated together in a designated area. Your baby will be placed in an enclosed incubator in your room. An incubator is a special crib made of clear plastic, it keeps your baby warm. You will be able to see your baby in the incubator.

When your baby is outside the incubator for feeding, bathing or cares you will need to:

- **wear a long-sleeved gown and a surgical mask**
- **clean your hands properly and often with soap and water or alcohol rub – before and after interacting with your baby**

Unfortunately we cannot allow your partner into the hospital to help you care for your baby. This is to protect other mothers, babies and our staff. Our nursing and medical teams will support you and help you in caring for your baby. We will aim to discharge you and your baby home as soon as you are ready after birth. If either you or your baby is too unwell to be discharged home together one or both of you may need to remain in hospital.

Feeding your baby

If you have coronavirus you can feed your baby with breast milk or formula. If you wish to breastfeed we will encourage and support you to do so. If you feel too unwell to breastfeed or if it is your preference, you may decide to express breast milk so that someone else, such as a family member at home, can feed your baby.

It is **critically important** that when you are feeding your baby by breast or by bottle, or when expressing breast milk that you:

- **wear a long-sleeved gown and a surgical mask**
- **clean your hands properly and often with soap and water or alcohol rub – before and after interacting with your baby**

Admission to the Neonatal Unit

If you have coronavirus and your baby is unwell and requires admission to the neonatal unit after birth they will be isolated.

Parents of babies in the Neonatal Unit

It is vitally important that we prevent the possible spread of coronavirus in the Neonatal Unit. We have to protect our critically ill babies and our staff caring for them. For this reason only the mother of a baby admitted to the Neonatal Unit will be permitted to visit and only if they are well.

Mothers, please do not visit your baby in the neonatal unit if you have:

- **Confirmed or suspected coronavirus**
- **Cold or flu-like symptoms**
- **Been in close contact with a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19 in the last 14 days**
- **Been overseas in the last 14 days**

Discharge home

As is routine at NMH, every baby will have a newborn examination by a midwife or doctor before they are discharged home. Visits by the public health nurse and 6 week checks with your GP will proceed as normal.

If your baby becomes unwell after discharge home

If you have coronavirus or your baby has been in contact with someone with coronavirus you should observe your baby for signs of infection for at least 14 days after the last contact. You should familiarise yourself with the use of a thermometer and how to take your baby's temperature. It may be difficult in a baby to distinguish between signs of coronavirus and any other type of infection. Therefore, if your baby is unwell with any of the following symptoms they should be seen by a doctor and testing for coronavirus should be considered:

- abnormal temperature [$<36.0^{\circ}\text{C}$ or $>38.0^{\circ}\text{C}$]
- poor feeding
- difficulty breathing or rapid breathing
- lethargy or sleepiness
- tummy upset – recurrent diarrhoea and/or vomiting

Babies that are infected with coronavirus are likely to have mild symptoms. Babies with a snuffly nose and/or cough that are otherwise well and do not have abnormal temperature or breathing difficulties can continue to be observed at home.

If your baby is unwell and needs to be seen by a doctor, call your GP to arrange a review or bring them to a children's hospital. If for any reason you need to bring your baby to a hospital or GP practice after discharge PLEASE PHONE AHEAD.