



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, 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.

One option, if you are unwell may be to arrange for someone else such as a family member to care for your baby at home while you recover. This is to protect your baby from catching the virus. Your baby's care could be provided at home or in the hospital depending on your symptoms and test results. How long this lasts for will vary.

Caring for your baby after birth

If you have coronavirus and are caring for your baby on the postnatal ward, 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 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 surgical mask
- Clean your hands properly and often with soap and water or alcohol rub – before and after interacting with your baby

You will be advised about how many visitors you and your baby can have. Currently we are advising that this is just you and your partner. All visitors will need to wear protective equipment. We will aim to discharge you and your baby home as soon as you are ready after birth. If you or your baby are too unwell to be discharged home together one or both of you may need to remain in hospital.

After birth (in the hospital and at home), you should observe your baby for signs of infection. Please familiarise yourself with thermometer use. This will be for at least 14 days after the last contact with you. If your baby becomes unwell, they will need to be seen by a doctor and tested for coronavirus. Babies in this circumstance should be discussed with your GP or brought directly to a children's hospital. If for any reason you need to bring your baby back into ANY hospital or GP practice after discharge PLEASE PHONE AHEAD.

Breastfeeding

If you have coronavirus and wish to breastfeed we will encourage you to do so as normal. If you feel too unwell to breastfeed you may decide to express breast milk so that someone else, such as your partner can feed your baby. If you are using a breast pump we would encourage you to bring your own into hospital and clean it after each use.

Admission to the Neonatal Unit from the Postnatal Ward

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

Parents of Neonatal Intensive Care Babies

In order to prevent the possible spread of coronavirus, if your baby has been admitted to the Neonatal Unit please do not visit the unit if:

- You have coronavirus
- You have cold or flu like symptoms
- Been in close contact with a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19 in the last 14 days
- Have been overseas in the last 14 days

Phone your GP inform them your baby is in ICU and you need testing for COVID-19