

12 May 2020

Maternity services at St George's Hospital

Thank you to all of our women for your cooperation and understanding during the current Covid-19 outbreak. We know this may be an anxious time for you and your family and if you have any questions or concerns, please do speak to your midwife. We remain open to all women and their babies and our teams are looking forward to caring for you.

Information about the virus and how to best protect women and staff is being updated frequently. We will continue to keep you up to date about any changes which may affect your pregnancy, birth or postnatal recovery. The steps we have taken so far include:

- Carrying out antenatal appointments by telephone wherever possible and asking women to attend alone to antenatal and scanning appointments that have to happen in person
- Asking women and their birth partners to self-isolate before their due date to make sure that they can be accompanied in active labour
- Stopping visitors to the antenatal and postnatal wards to protect women and babies
- Asking women to attend all outpatient appointments alone
- Asking women and birth partners to complete questionnaires about Covid-19 symptoms on admission to birthing areas and testing women as necessary
- Equipping our staff with appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

We know that you will have questions about your pregnancy and birth and how this may be affected by Covid-19. The Royal College of Obstetrics and Gynaecology and the Royal College of Midwives have some excellent advice and information for pregnant women and their partners which can be found here: <https://www.rcog.org.uk/en/guidelines-research-services/guidelines/coronavirus-pregnancy/covid-19-virus-infection-and-pregnancy/>

You can also access the latest general advice from Public Health England:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health-england>

If you are more than 20 weeks pregnant and have any symptoms relating to your pregnancy you should call Delivery Suite Triage for advice on **020 8767 4654** and attend the Delivery Suite (1st Floor Lanesborough Wing) if advised. Please tell the person you speak to if you also have symptoms of Covid-19.

Pregnancy issues include but are not limited to:

- Bleeding
- Pain
- Severe headache
- Baby not moving as often as usual
- Waters breaking
- Swelling of your face, hands or feet

Covid-19 SYMPTOMS IN PREGNANCY

If you have symptoms of Covid-19 (new persistent cough and/or a temperature) please speak to your midwife.

If you have **NO** issues with your pregnancy, you will be advised to self-isolate for a minimum of 7 days (if you live alone) or 14 days if you share a house.

'**Self-isolating**' means avoiding leaving the house, even to buy food or essentials. Instead you should ask for help with groceries, shopping and medication, which can be left on the doorstep. The person affected should stay in a well-ventilated room away from other people in the home, and limit contact as much as possible. For full details on self-isolation visit:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance>

Antenatal Care

If you are newly pregnant and would like to book to have your baby at St George's, please complete this form: <https://www.stgeorges.nhs.uk/pregnancy-referral-form/>. You do not need to see your GP before you send this referral to us.

A member of the team will contact you to organise an appointment, which is likely to be a telephone appointment.

Given the situation of the Covid-19-19 pandemic, at present, St George's maternity services will be undertaking as much antenatal care as can safely be offered by telephone. Services for women who need to physically attend the hospital will continue. **If you are asked to attend the hospital for an appointment, you should come alone. Maternity care is essential and is based on years of evidence. Our doctors and midwives will only ask to see you in person when it is necessary and will have evaluated the risks of not seeing you as greater than the risk of possible Covid-19 transmission.**

You should receive a text from the hospital to confirm that you should not attend St George's for your appointment, and instead expect a midwife or doctor to call you at the allocated time.

Routine and specialist scans will continue to be offered to all women for the time being. Please note, **you must not bring anyone with you to these scans** aside from exceptional cases where explicit permission is given by a midwife or doctor.

CANCELLATION OF ANTENATAL (PARENT) EDUCATION CLASS

In order to reduce the risk of infection, we have unfortunately had to cancel all antenatal education classes. We apologise for any inconvenience this may cause - we are working to update resources on our website to help to provide some information that will be useful to you. In the meantime, you may find these links useful:

NCT: <https://www.nct.org.uk/>

NHS: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/>

Caesarean Birth:

<https://www.stgeorges.nhs.uk/service/maternity-services/new-beginnings/#mcontent>

<https://youtu.be/PvbFYqEzXHA>

Pain Relief in labour:

<https://www.labourpains.com/home>

https://www.labourpains.com/Information_Videos

https://www.labourpains.com/assets/_managed/cms/files/InfoforMothers/Pain%20Relief%20Comparison%20Card/pain%20relief%20comparison%20card%20september%202014.pdf

SOCIAL SUPPORT

There are a number of local groups that you may find useful in terms of building social contacts with other families:

Facebook Groups: Tooting Parents Network, Streatham Mums' Network, Balham Mums' Network, St George's Maternity Voices Partnership, Wimbledon Mummy Network, Mummy's Gin Fund

Websites: <https://tootingbaby.co.uk/>

MATERNITY UNIT VISITOR RESTRICTIONS

We will continue to work hard to keep you, your baby and our staff safe during the Covid-19 outbreak. As part of our response we are constantly reviewing our visitor policy to ensure that our advice is based on the best possible evidence. Following our most recent risk assessment by the senior midwives and doctors, we have agreed to update our visitor policy as follows:

- All women in active labour can be accompanied by one birth partner. This birth partner should not have any symptoms of COVID-19
- Women requiring an elective or emergency Caesarean section, or an instrumental delivery in theatre, may be accompanied by their birth partner in the theatre.
- Unfortunately, we are still unable to allow birth partners to accompany women admitted to the antenatal ward for induction of labour. However, once transferred to the delivery suite the birth partner can join the woman.
- No visitors, not even the birth partner, are allowed on the postnatal or antenatal wards. We are working hard to ensure that women can go home after birth as soon as it is safe for them and their baby.
- Translation and special needs services for women are available by phone where possible.

- Support staff who need to physically accompany the mothers in hospital – for example, translators and sign language providers – will still be allowed, as will other essential support, but each case will be assessed on the individual's needs.

Women who come into hospital are reminded to bring everything that they and their baby will need for their entire stay, including after the birth. Birth partners will also need to bring food and drinks for themselves as they cannot come and go during the labour.

We will review this policy as the Covid-19 situation changes and we will keep you up to date. Women will always have a midwife with them in labour and we encourage women to speak to their midwife with any questions or concerns about their pregnancy or birth. Our aim is to ensure that you can have a very positive birth experience with our dedicated staff during this pandemic. We look forward to seeing you all soon!

AFTER YOUR BABY IS BORN

Before you leave hospital, your midwife will explain the pattern your postnatal care in the community will follow. In most cases, in the first few days at home midwife will speak to you on the phone to check your and your baby's wellbeing. You will then be asked to attend a clinic or have a home visit from a midwife between 5 and 8 days after your baby is born. You will then have further telephone support from a midwife before care is transferred to your GP and Health Visitor.

If you feel unwell at home or experience any unusual symptoms, please call Delivery Suite on **020 8767 4654**. These symptoms/concerns include but are not limited to:

- Bleeding becoming heavier or passing clots
- You are concerned your wound may be infected
- You are concerned about your baby's feeding or your baby is not waking for feeds
- You feel unwell or feverish
- You have pain or swelling in your legs or are short of breath

NO RISK FROM BREASTFEEDING

If you wish to breastfeed your baby, you can continue to do so even if you have symptoms of Covid-19. The Royal College of Obstetrics and Gynaecology and the Royal College of Midwives have advised that there is no evidence showing that the virus can be carried in breastmilk. They state that the well-recognised benefits of breastfeeding outweigh any potential risks of transmission of coronavirus through breastmilk.

The main risk of breastfeeding if you have symptoms of Covid-19 is close contact between you and your baby, as if you cough or sneeze, this could contain droplets which are infected with the virus, leading to infection of the baby after birth.

A discussion about the risks and benefits of breastfeeding should take place between you and your family and your maternity team.

This guidance may change as knowledge evolves.

When you or anyone else feeds your baby, the following precautions are recommended:

- Wash your hands before touching your baby, breast pump or bottles
- Try to avoid coughing or sneezing on your baby while feeding at the breast
- Consider wearing a face mask while breastfeeding, if available
- Follow recommendations for pump cleaning after each use
- Consider asking someone who is well to feed your expressed breast milk to your baby.

If you choose to feed your baby with formula or expressed milk, it is recommended that you follow strict adherence to [sterilisation guidelines](#). If you are expressing breast milk in hospital, a dedicated breast pump should be used.

For further advice on feeding your baby, please see our dedicated pages here (<https://www.stgeorges.nhs.uk/service/maternity-services/3-after-youve-had-your-baby/feeding-your-baby/>)

Finally, thank you for your patience during this time. We are doing our very best to care for you and we look forward to looking after you.

If you have any concerns, please do contact your Midwife or the appropriate number on the back of your notes.