

# Maternity High Dependency Unit

**Thank you for taking the time to read this leaflet. It has been given to you and / or your partner because you have a specific condition which will benefit from you having care in the Maternity High Dependency Unit (HDU) or you have developed a complication in your pregnancy or labour which needs specialist care.**

## **What is Maternity HDU?**

The Maternity High Dependency Unit is based in the Delivery Suite and there are several rooms equipped with specialist monitoring and facilities. It is where we provide care for women needing more frequent observations than on a normal ward. You will be cared for by a multidisciplinary team including specially trained midwives, obstetricians, anaesthetists and nurses. Depending on the reason for your admission you may also have input from other specialties including: renal, urology and respiratory.

## **Why do I need to be in HDU?**

You are in HDU as you need more complex care than can be provided on a postnatal ward. During your stay you will be cared for on a 1 to 1 or 1 to 2 basis, depending on your condition. You will be cared for by either a nurse or a specially trained midwife. After a period you may be 'stepped down' to the Postnatal Ward, where the ratio of midwife is 1 to every 8 women.

As mentioned above there are different reasons as to why you are in HDU. These include:

- Existing heart conditions
- Existing medical conditions

- Specific conditions relating to pregnancy (such as severe pre-eclampsia)
- Complications relating to labour and birth (such as a large blood loss, infection during or after your birth).

### **What kind of monitoring will I need?**

Whilst you are in HDU, you may require extra monitoring.

This includes:

- Cardiac monitoring (a continuous ECG - heart tracing to look at your heart)
- Arterial line (a small tube in your artery, which gives us a very accurate reading of your blood pressure. We can also take blood samples from it.)
- Supplementary oxygen: this is either given through a face mask or small nasal tubes.
- Naso gastric tube (a tube that passes through your nose to your stomach. It empties your stomach contents if you are being very sick).

For some women it may be safer for them to have HDU care during their labour or induction process. We therefore have CTG monitors which look at your baby's heart rate and ensure their wellbeing.

We know that the additional monitoring can seem frightening but it is there to make sure you receive the best possible care. Please feel free to ask your midwife / nurse if you do not understand what something is for.

### **Can my partner stay with me?**

We recognise that if you are unwell, it is beneficial for you to have your partner with you and to help with caring for your baby. We will accommodate your partner staying overnight. You may also live far away and it is not feasible for your partner to go home. We strongly

recommend they stay in the on-site hotel 'The Pelican', as we do not have amenities for them and this will enable they can also get some rest - [www.pelican-london.com](http://www.pelican-london.com). There are open visiting hours in HDU. However we recommend that you limit the number of visitors whilst you are in HDU to encourage rest.

### **Can my baby stay with me?**

Yes, if your baby is well enough. Sometimes if your baby is born early or s/he has other conditions that may need to be treated in the Neonatal Unit. This is true even if you are on Postnatal Ward. If your baby is with you then the midwives will encourage you to look after your baby as much as possible and can also help you with establishing breastfeeding.

If your baby is in the neonatal unit, the nurses and midwives will help you see them. There is a refrigerator available for the storage of expressed colostrum and formula feeds

### **What do I need to bring with me?**

If you are having a planned admission to HDU, please bring with you all your normal items for labour, birth and postnatal. We strongly recommend having a small toiletries bag, with toothpaste, toothbrush, face-wipes, hairbrush etc. Even if you are unwell, there are many proven benefits both physically and psychologically to maintaining independent self-care. It is also a good idea to bring in your own clothes.

If you wish, you may bring your own food or your partner may bring in some. Please feel free to bring in Bluetooth speakers and your own music. It can be quite busy in the unit so some earplugs and an eye mask could be helpful too so that you can get better sleep.

### **How long do I need to stay in HDU?**

This depends on the reason for your admission and your clinical condition. Your midwife will keep you updated on this. Sometimes,

you may have an existing plan in place to spend a specified amount of time in HDU post-delivery. At the appropriate time, you will be stepped down to the postnatal ward. Sometimes it is possible to go home directly from HDU.

### **Will there be any follow up?**

You may feel upset, worried or anxious in the weeks and months after your HDU admission. This can be a normal response to a frightening event and may pass with time. However, if you feel things are very distressing or interfering with your day to day life **we highly recommend** you speak to somebody about them.

- Birth reflections service - an opportunity to discuss your birth with our Professional Midwifery Advocate (pma@stgeorges.nhs.uk).
- If you had an unexpected admission to HDU (for example for significant blood loss or infection) you will be followed up by our high risk obstetricians and an appointment will be sent to you.
- You can self-refer at any time to 'IAPT' (Improving Access to Psychological Therapies).

These services are specific to each borough and offer a range of talking therapies.

If you feel this may be beneficial to you and you are still an inpatient, you can ask your midwife to help fill out a referral form.

**For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit [www.stgeorges.nhs.uk](http://www.stgeorges.nhs.uk)**

## Additional services

### Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings (near the lift foyer).

**Tel:** 020 8725 2453 **Email:** [pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk)

### NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health. **Web:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

### NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones. **Tel:** 111



### AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website ([www.accessable.co.uk](http://www.accessable.co.uk)). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.

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