

Maternity information factsheet

Testing for COVID-19

We have given you this factsheet because we are offering you a test for COVID-19. We hope this factsheet will help to answer some of the questions you may have.

If you have any further questions, please speak to the team caring for you.

Why am I being offered a test for COVID-19?

We are offering a COVID-19 (coronavirus) test to everyone who may need to stay in hospital overnight.

Testing everyone helps us to:

- make sure that the people in our hospitals are cared for safely
- give you advice and information about yourself and your new baby if you become unwell
- understand the pattern and spread of infection within the community and the families that we are caring for
- protect staff from infection, especially if people who have the infection without any symptoms come into hospital

What will happen in the test?

We will explain the test and ask for your verbal consent. The test for COVID-19 involves taking a swab of the throat and a swab of the nose (up into both nostrils). We may need to use a tongue depressor to hold your tongue down to get to the back of your throat. We will ask you to wipe your nose clean before we swab it. It takes a few seconds to collect each swab.

The swabs are then transferred into a testing tube. The results usually come back within 24 hours. We will let you know about your results, even if you have already gone home.

When will I have the test?

If you are having an elective caesarean section, you will be tested two days before you come into hospital so that your results are back before the operation. This means we can organise the order of the operating list and make sure we use the appropriate cleaning procedures and personal protective equipment (PPE).

Everyone else who needs to stay in hospital will be tested when they arrive.

Will I be tested if I am at the New Forest Birth Centre, or if I give birth at home?

Yes, we will offer the same test if you give birth at the New Forest Birth Centre or at home. However, it may take slightly longer to get your results back.

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You will also need to have your test results back before you can transfer to the New Forest Birth Centre after giving birth. If you test positive for COVID-19, you will not be able to transfer.

Will my birth partner be tested?

We are now recommending COVID-19 tests for birth partners at the same time and in the same way as we test you.

We will continue to check your birth partner's temperature and will use screening questions to ensure that your chosen partner is symptom free when they arrive at the hospital. Any partners who are unwell or have a fever when they arrive will be sent home for the safety of the other people in the hospital. Some partners may be asked to wear a mask on the wards and we will provide one if necessary.

After you have given birth your partner will be able to visit you on the postnatal ward if their testing results are negative (suggesting that they do not have COVID-19). If their test results are positive, they will need to leave the hospital and will not be able to return while you are in hospital. They will be asked to self-isolate at home for seven days or until they are symptom free.

What happens if I decline testing for COVID-19?

Testing is not compulsory. If you choose not to be tested, we will respect your choice. We will continue to treat you based on your symptoms and observations. If you have a cough or fever, you will be asked to give birth on the delivery suite. On the postnatal ward you will stay in a transition area and not mix with families who are known to have negative test results.

If your partner declines testing, they will not be able to visit you on the postnatal ward.

Will I be told if anyone who cared for me or was in a ward with me tests positive?

If someone who was in the same area as you tests positive for COVID-19, we will give you a letter with information about this. You will need to isolate at home for 14 days as a precaution. We will offer you further testing if you develop any symptoms.

What difference will the test result make to my care?

If you are well with no symptoms, and have a negative test result (or if we have not received your result yet):

Your care will continue as normal. We are wearing personal protective equipment (PPE, including a waterproof gown, gloves, masks and visors or goggles) for everyone giving birth. Your temperature will be checked every four hours. All your other care will continue as usual and our birth recommendations will be based on your health and any complications in pregnancy. The midwife-led unit and water birth will continue to be offered to women where their other risks allow.

If you are unwell with symptoms of the virus and/or if you test positive:

- You will give birth with some additional precautions and monitoring, and will be cared for in a separate area after the birth.
- We would recommend giving birth on our delivery suite where we have extra measures in place and a team of staff from different specialities who can provide expertise about your care.
- We will be monitoring your observations frequently, including any signs of concern with your breathing.
- We may recommend using continuous monitoring for your baby's heartbeat. There is some evidence that babies of mothers who are unwell do not tolerate labour as well.

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- We would no longer offer a water birth. Evidence suggests transmission is possible in faeces and PPE is not able to provide enough protection in water to keep staff safe.
- Epidural analgesia (pain relief) is recommended, as this reduces the chance that you would need a general anaesthesia for any urgent intervention during birth.
- We do not recommend changing your planned mode of birth. Your progress in labour will be monitored as usual.
- We recommend having an injection immediately after birth to deliver your placenta. This reduces the risk of bleeding and therefore the need for urgent treatment of any heavy bleeding including general anaesthesia.
- We may recommend wearing anti-embolic stockings and having injections to reduce the chance of developing blood clots in your legs after birth.

When you are ready to return home we will ask you to follow government advice on isolating at home for a total of seven days, or until your household is symptom free. Your postnatal maternity care will continue. We will provide telephone contact and a day five visit to your home by staff wearing PPE.

If you are unwell with a fever, we will also continue to consider and investigate other possible causes of sepsis that we know may be harmful during birth.

Will my baby need testing or special care if I test positive for COVID-19?

If your baby is healthy at birth they will stay with you. We would still recommend breastfeeding, if you were planning to, as the benefits of this far outweigh any potential risk of transmission. While you are breastfeeding and in close contact with your baby, we recommend that you wear a face mask and continue with good hand hygiene to minimise the risk of transmission. If you need any masks, please ask the maternity team.

We will not test your baby unless they are unwell. We would recommend having your baby's newborn check (or NIPE) completed before you go home.

We aim to keep all mothers and babies together. However, if your baby is unwell we may need to care for them in our neonatal unit. The neonatal unit team will assess which babies need to be tested for COVID-19 and will offer testing to all babies who show any symptoms. Some babies need additional medication or observations after birth. We will assess whether this can be done safely on the postnatal ward with you, or if it is safest to do this in the neonatal unit.

When you go home we will give you an information leaflet about signs of concern to look out for in your baby, and how to seek advice and help if you need to.

For further advice on symptoms to look out for in newborn babies, please visit our website: **www.uhs.nhs.uk/OurServices/Maternityservices** or you can download the Wessex Healthier Together app.

For a translation of this document, or a version in another format such as easy read, large print, Braille or audio, please telephone **023 8120 4688**.

For help preparing for your visit, arranging an interpreter or accessing the hospital, please visit **www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalneeds**