



Promoting · Supporting · Influencing

## COVID-19 - Information for RCM Members

### Members

In the first instance your employer should be advising you what the local plans are around COVID-19 and the procedures they have put in place to deal with it. The Trust will have prepared a protocol for management of cases and protection of workforce.

The staff-side health unions and NHS Employers have published guidance for NHS staff and this can be read here. Government advice for primary care health professionals if a patient has the virus is here.

#### **What can I do to stop becoming infected or spreading the infection?**

The basic precautions about infection control apply. This includes good hand hygiene and good hand washing. Avoid touching your mouth, nose or eyes between dealing with women and babies and wash your hands before and after every contact. See NHS handwashing advice here.

Hand hygiene applies to your homelife also. The advice is to wash your hands regularly and as soon as you come from public places to your home and when you arrive at work. If you cannot wash your hands the official advice is to use hand sanitisers. See NHS advice here.

If you have the symptoms associated with COVID-19 which include coughing, shortness of breath and fever, firstly as advice to all the population you need to call 111, self-isolate and report this to your line manager and your occupational health dept. If you do have these symptoms it may not be COVID-19 and may be a bad cold or possibly flu call 111

#### **What measures are likely for healthcare professionals?**

Government advice for primary care health professionals if a patient has the virus is here.

The Staff side unions and NHS Employers have published guidance for NHS staff and this can be read here

#### **At what point will workplace testing (temperature etc) come into play?**

This is not in place yet. Your employer should be informing you of their plans and guidance on this. If this has not happened, we recommend speaking to your Trust infection control team for advice and find out what your employer is doing and recommending.

For anyone showing symptoms of having the virus and undergoing testing for it the advice is to call 111 and self-isolate at home if that is possible. Do inform your line manager and occupational health dept. See Government advice on this here.

**If infection control measures - where staff are quarantined etc - impact safe staffing levels, who will take decisions to divert women in labour and when will that decision be taken and communicated?**

As with any temporary unit closure this will be a decision taken by the directors/heads of midwifery in collaboration with senior obstetricians and the Trust/Board senior management. This should then be communicated to staff at the unit being closed to admissions and the unit/s who will receive those women. The usual communication policies and pathways for contacting any women who will be affected and others, such as the ambulance service, will also apply.

**What if we have a woman on the unit who is confirmed as having the virus?**

As per the Government guidance the woman will need to be isolated and the relevant infection control procedures put in place. Discretion needs to be considered in not alarming other women and visitors in the unit. There will be restricted visiting for the woman and care needs to be taken to keep her birth partner informed. Information should be only given with the woman's consent.

If the woman or relative with known COVID-19 or with symptoms has been in the public areas of the unit, infection control measures will be escalated as necessary. This could mean closure of the whole unit until it has been disinfected. Other steps regarding staff testing will be triggered by the trust management. Specialist advice will be provided by the local High Consequence Infections Diseases Unit. Your Trust infection control team will advise on this.

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## **Pregnant Women**

There is general advice for the public on COVID-19 from the Government here.

**What things can I do to prevent becoming infected with COVID-19?**

The most important thing to do is to wash your hands regularly and effectively as soon as you come from public places to your home or workplace. There is useful advice here on the best way to do this to reduce any infection risk, not just for COVID-19, but for other things like colds and flu. Public health bodies also recommend that, where possible, you

may wish to avoid crowded places. If you are planning to travel abroad please check updated Government information [here](#).

### **What measures are to be put in place for women in or close to labour who are in quarantine, or have tested positive?**

There will be national and local advice as how the organisation of the care will be delivered for women in quarantine, or who have tested positive. Your maternity team will work with other specialists to ensure the you and your baby receive safe quality care, respecting your birth plan as close as possible.

### **What about my baby; how can this affect them if I am pregnant?**

This is a very new virus. We are just beginning to learn about it and there is very little research about it. For most people, the impact of the virus is relatively mild, similar to flu. Current research, published in *The Lancet*, found that there is no evidence that COVID-19 causes serious problems in young babies or that it can pass to your developing baby while you are pregnant.

If you are pregnant you are more vulnerable to getting infections than a woman who is not pregnant. How the virus will affect you is not yet very clear.

If you are unwell you should contact 111 for advice and the maternity unit looking after your pregnancy.

### **What about after the birth if I am suspected having the virus or have the virus?**

Covid-19 is passed by person to person contact. The current advice for those who are suspected of having the virus, if at home is to self-isolate and call 111 for advice. If you are still receiving care from your midwife you need to inform her also, so your care can be adjusted accordingly.

### **Can my baby catch the virus from breastmilk?**

UNICEF Australia has said that given the insignificant role of breastmilk in passing on other similar viruses affecting breathing, women can continue breastfeeding, while applying all the necessary precautions, such as handwashing and perhaps wearing a mask when holding your baby.