

Birthing Center Policies During COVID-19

Our goal throughout your birth and stay is to keep you and your baby safe. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have altered some of our practices and policies. While our policies will almost certainly evolve over time, we have outlined our current plan below. We hope you can see that our commitment to the safety and wellbeing of our community is reflected within these guidelines. If you have any further questions, please contact your OB provider directly.

PRIOR TO ARRIVAL

We communicate regularly with the obstetric providers in the community. Please ask your provider about specific concerns you might have as you prepare for delivery. There are some tests we may begin in your obstetric care provider's office in the future or at another mutually agreed upon location.

WHEN YOU ARRIVE AT THE HOSPITAL

When you enter the hospital you will have your temperature taken and be asked some screening questions. If you do not already have masks, you and your support person will be provided with them and asked to keep the masks on as much as possible while in the hospital. Health care providers will also remain masked during your care. These masks prevent respiratory droplets from entering the air and can reduce the risk of virus transmission.

WHEN YOU ARRIVE AT LABOR AND DELIVERY

Before you and your support person come in or when you arrive, you will be asked questions in order to assess your risk of COVID-19. This is done in order to protect you, our staff and our other patients.

Questions may include:

- How are you feeling?
- Have you had a fever?
- Have you had a cough?
- Have you or your support person been exposed to anyone who has tested positive?
- Have you or your support person been asked to self-quarantine for any reason?

Should you or your support person have symptoms related to COVID-19, we will discuss those symptoms with you and make a plan for further evaluation.

TESTING

The virus is contagious even when individuals have no symptoms. All mothers will be asked to be tested for COVID-19 upon arriving at the hospital. Testing will help us identify COVID-19- positive individuals and develop a care plan that supports families while minimizing the risk of transmission to others,

including your baby.

The test results take about 3 hours to come back.

CAN I DECLINE COVID-19 TESTING?

Yes, you can decline COVID-19 testing, although we think the test is very important. Knowing your COVID-19 status ensures that we are taking necessary precautions when caring for you, allows for appropriate discharge teaching for the care of your newborn, and ensures the safety of all staff and patients in the Birthing Center, Mother Baby Unit, and NICU. If you decline testing but have symptoms consistent with COVID-19, we will discuss what additional precautions may be necessary.

IF I DECLINE TESTING, WHAT DOES THAT MEAN FOR MY CARE?

- You will still be allowed to have one, healthy support person with you for the duration of your stay. This support person will be asked to wear a mask at all times. They will be asked to remain in your room as much as feasible, for the duration of the stay.
- The same standard care will be provided to you and your newborn, regardless of testing status. You will be assigned a nurse for every shift who is skilled in providing labor support and assisting with breastfeeding and newborn care. You still have access to the same providers and anesthesiology for an epidural if desired.
- If you need a Cesarean delivery, your support person will not be permitted in the operating room. Anesthesiologists have extra precautions required during a procedure when COVID-19 status is unknown. This extra attention means it is more difficult to have extra non-medical people in the operating room.
- If your baby requires admission to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU), there may be restrictions to accessing the NICU. The NICU is a very specialized environment that requires stricter visitation to ensure the safety of all of the babies in their care.
- If you do not have symptoms of COVID-19, we will ask you to keep your baby in your room at all times while on the Mother-Baby Unit for your postpartum stay. All newborn care and testing will occur in your room, without access to the newborn nursery.

MASKING

- All providers, nurses and staff will be wearing masks. The type of mask may vary, determined by such factors as whether you have COVID-19 or the provider who is caring for you.
- Support people should wear a mask as much as possible while they are here. We understand they will need to remove the mask to eat and drink throughout their stay.
- We ask that mothers mask as they are able. We understand that as you move towards the active phase of labor you may not be able to tolerate the mask. Most mothers remove their mask at this point.
- If you or your support person needs to leave the room at any time, you both will be required to wear a mask. We encourage families to use our room order service to minimize leaving the room.

YOUR CARE TEAM

We are here for you. The care that you will receive has not changed. Your nursing staff and providers are focused on the birth of your baby and will provide the same level of care as they always have.

Use of technology. Depending on the circumstances, you may speak to a provider, such as an anesthesiologist or NICU provider, through Zoom on an iPad. This helps to minimize the number of people on our unit and entering patient rooms.

Pediatricians. Your pediatrician or the pediatric hospital team will see the baby daily.

CESAREAN DELIVERY

Many of our patients with scheduled C-sections are coming in the day prior to their surgery to have their pre-op labs drawn and to complete their COVID-19 test. If this is not feasible due to the distance you live from the hospital or other circumstances, we may be able to have your testing coordinated at a site closer to where you live or we may ask you to arrive earlier than usual to ensure all testing is complete in time for your surgery.

Due to the sensitive environment of an operating room, COVID-19- positive mothers or those who have declined testing will not be able to have their support person with them in the operating room.

VISITATION & SUPPORT PERSON

We are allowing one healthy support person to stay with you throughout your delivery and stay on the Mother-Baby Unit. We will ask that this person be the same person through the hospital stay and to remain here as much as feasible. Your support person is encouraged to utilize our “guest tray” off the Room Service Menu. The order can be completed over the phone with the use of a Visa/MasterCard for payment and the food delivered directly to the patient room.

Please note that we are revising this policy as the clinical situation changes. We remain committed to the least restrictive policies that fit the overall risk of contagion.

YOUR STAY ON THE MOTHER-BABY UNIT

While on the Mother-Baby Unit, our postpartum unit, we ask you and the support person wear a mask as able, especially when a member of your care team is in your room.

We anticipate a stay of 2 days for vaginal delivery and 3 days for a Cesarean delivery, but this of course depends on your situation. The decision of when to discharge you and your baby from the hospital will be a shared decision between you, your OB provider, and your pediatrician.

WHAT IF I TEST POSITIVE FOR COVID-19?

If you test positive we would initiate our COVID-19 protocols, which would include:

- Possibly moving your labor room. You would still remain in the Birthing Center. We have a few specialized rooms that circulate the air differently and make them better equipped for a mom with COVID-19.
- Your health care team would wear additional protective equipment: an N95, face shield, and

gown.

- We may offer to test your support person or designated healthy caregiver for the baby if this information is helpful to you in the care of your baby. Testing is voluntary for the support person.
- Your OB and pediatric team will discuss with you and your support person the options for your baby at the time of birth. We want to ensure that you have all of the information about what we know and what we don't know about COVID-19 in moms and newborns. This will allow you and your support person to make the best decision for your family. This may include keeping the baby in the same room with you or it may include your choosing to separate from your newborn during this time. We will not require separation from your baby, assuming your baby is healthy and doesn't need any specialized NICU care.
- We recommend that the healthy support person would provide most of the care for the newborn, either in your room or in a separate room (based on your decision) while wearing a mask, gown, and gloves. We would ask that you and your support person remain in the hospital room during the entire hospital stay.
- Your nurse and pediatrician will discuss recommendations to minimize the risk of giving COVID-19 to your baby after birth. This includes education on masking and hand hygiene.
- If the baby needs special care and cannot be in the room with you, we may ask for a non-COVID-19 healthy caregiver to visit the specialized nurseries until you are no longer contagious. The NICU team will review all of their policies with you if admission to the NICU becomes necessary.
- We strongly encourage breast milk feeding in whatever manner is right for your family, including breastfeeding at the breast or breast milk pumping for your health caregiver to feed. We have all supplies here to support you in your decisions.
- Your baby would not go to nursery and all care and testing would occur in the room. You will not be allowed to visit nurseries in the hospital until no longer infectious.
- Your nurse and pediatrician will provide instruction regarding how to minimize transmission of COVID-10 to your baby after discharge, what signs or symptoms of COVID-19 to look for in a newborn, and what follow-up is necessary for you and your newborn.