

COVID-19 Maternity update

Epworth Freemasons



Tuesday, 12 July 2022

Epworth Freemasons is doing everything possible to minimise potential exposure to COVID-19 within our hospital. We have a number of protocols in place to protect you, your care team and other families.

As we continue to meet Department of Health directives, we continue to update our protocols and we encourage you to keep in touch via our social media and website.

Things may look a little different in areas of our maternity hospital at the moment, but rest assured the same excellence in care remains. We continue to do all we can to support you before, during and after your baby's birth.

Please understand these protocols have been put in place to minimise the number of people coming and going within our unit, to reduce potential COVID-19 exposure to you and your baby. We have compiled the most frequently asked questions about maternity and how we are caring for you and your family during COVID-19.

Do I need to be tested for COVID-19?

Patients are encouraged to discuss COVID-19 testing requirements with their obstetrician and to isolate (where possible) from 37 weeks onwards to reduce the risk of contracting COVID-19. If symptoms develop, get tested immediately and notify your obstetrician.

On admission to Epworth Freemasons

On presentation, any maternity patient or support person who have not had a negative PCR within 48 hours can bring in a Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) result from that day or night before (screenshot/image of the negative RAT must be date stamped). If patients are unable to access a RAT or PCR, then a point of care RAT is undertaken on admission, with the result guiding the patient's management.

What if I am booked for a Caesarean section or induction of labour?

On presentation, any maternity patients who has not had a negative PCR within 48 hours can bring in a Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) result from that day or night before (screenshot/image of the negative RAT must be date stamped). If patients are unable to access a RAT or PCR, then a point of care RAT is undertaken on admission, with the result guiding the patient's management.

If I test positive to COVID-19, will I still be able to give birth at Epworth Freemasons?

We have developed pathways across our maternity services to safely care for COVID-19 positive patients at Epworth Freemasons. We continue to work closely with our obstetricians to care for each patient and their individual needs. If you are unwell and require a higher level of care, the individual care requirements of a patient may result in the need for a hospital transfer or admission to a tertiary center as per government's streaming guidelines.

What if my partner/support person tests positive for COVID-19?

In circumstances where a partner or support person has tested positive prior to the patient's admission, we will discuss your individual circumstances and options available. We will work with you, and your doctor, to ensure the best possible care for you and your baby. If your designated support person tests positive, you are free to change your support person.

In some circumstances we can allow a COVID-19 positive partner or support person to attend the birth. This would be dependent on your personal situation.

What if I become unwell while I am in hospital?

If you start showing signs and symptoms associated with COVID-19 while in hospital, please alert your midwife immediately. We will arrange urgent swab testing. In the meantime, you will need to stay in your room until we receive your results. Our midwives will continue to care for you, using personal protective equipment (PPE), until we have your test results. **Each patient and their own circumstances will determine the ongoing treatment.**

Can my partner or support person stay with me in both the Birth Suite and Postnatal Ward?

We know how important it is to have your partner or support person with you for your baby's birth and in those early days of their life. You may have **a maximum of two support people (includes partner)** with you at the birth. They do not have to be from the same household and there are no time limits. Please note, you cannot swap your support people and they will be required to wear PPE as provided, while in our hospital.

Can my partner or support people leave the hospital and come back?

We urge your support people to limit the number of times they come and go from our maternity unit and only leave if absolutely necessary.

Can I have visitors?

Two visitors are allowed, per patient, per day, **for a maximum of two hours** in our postnatal ward (not including partner). The permitted two visitors includes children.

Requirements for all visitors:

- All adult visitors (18 years and older) are required to have up-to-date **COVID-19 vaccination** or have evidence of a **negative rapid antigen test** from the day of the hospital visit. Please carry your proof of vaccination, vaccination exemption, or negative RAT on you at all times when visiting.
- All visitors, **including children 8 years and over**, are required to wear a mask in our hospitals for the duration of the visit. On arrival, please put on a hospital-supplied mask, available at entrance. A N95 mask will be provided when you arrive in our clinical areas. Visitors who have a mask exemption will be provided with a face shield. Both the N95 masks and face shields must be worn throughout clinical areas, including patient rooms, to protect yourself, your loved ones and our hospital staff.
- There will be two visiting periods for maternity patients each day, from **10am to 1pm** and from **4pm to 7pm**. Visits are restricted to a **maximum of two hours** in either of these periods. This is to allow rest time for patients and allow education and feeding support to take place.
- Please do not visit if there is a positive case in your household or a household member has COVID-19 symptoms and is awaiting a test result.
- Please do not visit any Epworth hospital if you are feeling unwell or have cold and flu symptoms or vomiting and diarrhoea as these infectious illnesses put our patients, visitors and staff at risk.

Can I stay at the Park Hyatt?

Our popular Epworth x Park Hyatt Melbourne program is currently running with the hotel having strict cleaning regimes in place.

You can learn more about Epworth x Park Hyatt Melbourne [here](#) and please note that it is subject to availability.

Newborn photography and hairdressing services

We are thrilled to confirm that our premium and preferred in-hospital photography and hairdressing services are now available to our families once again. Contact our preferred photographer, [Bella Fresh48](#), or hairdresser [Mama's Angels](#) directly, to secure your personal session with them. They will provide a negative RAT before entry and wear an N95 mask. A booking with either the photographer or hairdresser will count as one of your two permitted visitors in a day.

Will I be guaranteed a private room?

Yes, all of our inpatients enjoy spacious, private rooms and ensuites at Epworth Freemasons at either our Victoria Parade or Albert Street maternity wards.

Can we visit our newborn baby in the Special Care Nursery?

Yes, the parents, carers or guardians of a newborn baby within our Special Care Nursery can keep visiting, however the restrictions on other family members remain, including siblings. This is to ensure that we can physically distance within the nursery. Parents entering our SCN will be required to show a negative RAT test when they arrive.

Can I go home early?

Epworth Freemasons continues to allow this and we provide early discharge packages to women who wish to return home before their stay is due to end. Please know that you are under no obligation to go home early and our midwives will discuss your options. This is a regular service for families and it is not because of COVID-19.

Will you still have Lactation Consultants available during and after my inpatient stay?

Our specialist Lactation Consultants continue to provide a wonderful service to all of our new mums. Our team is now able to meet one on one with breastfeeding mothers during your stay with us and after you have gone home. These sessions are limited to mother and baby only and the mother will be required to show proof of a negative RAT before the appointment. . If you would like to speak with a Lactation Consultant please don't hesitate to ask your midwife, call 03 9418 8310 or email breastfeedingservices@epworth.org.au

Are you still providing antenatal education?

Our popular face to face Antenatal Education Program is currently suspended. However, we have delivering online education classes and learning packages. You can book your classes [via our website](#) or by using the information in your Welcome to Epworth Maternity pack. Our midwives are also here to answer any further questions after your class and you can [book an antenatal telephone call time here](#).

For details regarding your personal circumstances, please speak with your doctor.

We look forward to welcoming you to Epworth Freemasons.