

COVID-19 Maternity update

Epworth Geelong



Tuesday, 12 July 2022

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

To adhere to any 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 now, but rest assured the same excellence in care remains. We will 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 are doing everything we can to protect you, our staff and our doctors.

We have compiled the most frequently asked questions about maternity and how we are caring for you and your family during COVID-19.

COVID-19 testing

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

On admission to Epworth Geelong

On presentation, any maternity patient or support person 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 Geelong?

We have developed pathways across our maternity services to safely care for COVID-19 positive patients at Epworth Geelong. 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, we will work with your doctor to ensure that those needs are met. In some cases, the individual care requirements of a patient may result in the need for a hospital transfer.

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

In circumstances where a support person has tested positive prior to the patient's admission, Epworth will liaise with you and your partner/support person to discuss the individual circumstances and options available.



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

On presentation, any maternity patient 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 need a test, where can I go?

You and your partner or support person are able to have your COVID-19 PCR test at Melbourne Pathology located at Epworth Geelong. Opening hours are 8.30am to 5pm, Monday to Friday and 8.30am – 1.00pm Saturday and Sunday.

What if I become unwell while I am in hospital?

If you start displaying signs and symptoms associated with COVID-19 while in hospital, please alert your midwife immediately. We will arrange urgent COVID-19 testing. In the meantime, you will have 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 their 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 2 hours maximum in our postnatal ward (in addition to your 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 the hospital entrance. N95 masks 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** (2 hour maximum visit permitted in 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 COVID-19 positive case in your household or a household member has any symptoms or 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 have newborn photography in hospital?

Our premium in-hospital photography is still available to our families. Contact our preferred photographer, [Bella Arte Photography](#), to secure your personal session. If you organise an in-hospital photography session, the photographer will provide a negative RAT before entry and wear an N95 mask.

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 other family members, siblings or visitors are not permitted. 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 Geelong continues to allow this in consultation with your obstetrician and midwifery team. You are under no obligation to go home early and our midwives will discuss all of 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. The inpatient service continues and we have lactation consultants available for one on one outpatient appointments after you go 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 one of our Lactation Consultants, please don't hesitate to call **03 5271 8323**.

Are you still providing antenatal education?

Our popular face to face antenatal education program is currently suspended. However, we have online learning packages that have been developed specifically for your Epworth Geelong experience. You can book your online classes directly with our Maternity services team on **03 5271 8323**.

If you have any questions about the pandemic restrictions at Epworth or any medical concerns, please call the Maternity Unit on **03 5271 8379**.

We look forward to welcoming you to Epworth Geelong.