

20 November 2020

Epworth Geelong Maternity COVID-19 Update

Epworth are continuing to do everything possible to minimise potential exposure to COVID-19 Coronavirus within our hospital and need you and your family's help to stay safe.

Things may look different in areas of our maternity hospital at the moment, but rest assured that 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 that these protocols have been put in place to minimise the number of people coming and going within our unit and therefore reducing potential COVID-19 exposure to you and your baby. We are doing everything that we can to protect you, our staff and doctors.

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

What are the current COVID-19 test requirements for Epworth Geelong maternity patients and partners/support persons?

Epworth Geelong maternity patients and their partner or support person do not require a COVID-19 test.

Caesarean requiring general anaesthesia

Epworth Geelong maternity patients who require a general anaesthesia for the caesarean section will only require a COVID-19 test if they:

- Live in Metropolitan Melbourne
- have travelled to Metropolitan Melbourne in the past 14 days for work or other purposes
- have any COVID-19 symptoms.

Your partner or support person will not require a COVID-19 test.

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

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. Your partner or support person remains welcome in the Birth Suite and Postnatal Units at Epworth.

Please be aware that it's only one designated partner or support person who will be allowed in our maternity ward throughout the duration of your stay.

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

We urge your partner or support person to limit the number of times they come and go from our Maternity Unit and only leave if absolutely necessary.

Your partner or support person will be required to wear a mask while in public facing areas of Epworth and when travelling to and from the hospital.

Can I have visitors?

From Friday, 20 November 2020, you may have two visitors a day (in addition to your partner or support person).

The two visitors per day may be your baby's siblings, or two other loved ones. Visitors may stay for up to two hours during our visiting hours 10am -1pm or 4pm – 7pm.

Anyone coming into our hospital will need to have their temperature checked upon entry.

What if I am showing symptoms of COVID-19 prior to my admission into hospital?

Please speak with your doctor as soon as possible if you have any COVID-19 symptoms prior to your admission. They will guide you on what to do next. Early notification allows us to prepare and ensure the safety of you, your baby and Epworth staff. Arrangements may see your planned birth postponed, until you are well or return a negative swab result. We would only do this if it is safe for you and your baby.

What if I am feeling unwell and go into labour?

If you're unwell and go into labour or need to come into maternity for any other reason, please ensure that you alert the midwives in birth suite when you call. They will guide you through what to do next.

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 test to establish if you have the virus. These clinically urgent results usually take approximately 24 hours to return. In the meantime, you will have to stay in your room until we have the results. Our midwives will continue to care for you, using personal protective equipment (PPE) until we know the test results.

Our PPE includes a full-length gown, a surgical face mask and eye protection and would be worn by our staff whenever they come into your room to provide care. We understand this can appear quite confronting, but please be aware that it is for everyone's safety. If your swab results come back negative, staff will no longer be required to wear this protection. If your result comes back positive, we will continue to care for you in your room, wearing full protective wear.

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. The antenatal program includes videos that can be watched in the comfort of your own home and a live, online Q&A zoom session with one of our experienced midwives. These are held in small groups so that we can answer all of your questions in real time.

If you have any further questions after your live session, we are also happy to discuss any further queries over the telephone.

You can book your classes directly with our Maternity services team on 5271 8322.

Will I be allowed to use gas when I'm in labour?

Gas is still available for pain relief, just as long as you are not suspected or confirmed as having COVID-19. If you happen to show any respiratory symptoms or are confirmed as having COVID-19, gas cannot be used. If this is the case, your obstetrician and midwives can support you with alternative options for pain relief.

The midwives will support you with alternative pain relief options during this period.

I have a student midwife following my pregnancy and birth, can they still attend?

For the same reasons we are limiting visitors to one support person only, we cannot allow student midwives that are not a part of our formal training program to attend the hospital during your admission. You are however welcome to include them via a video call, should you wish.

Will I be guaranteed a private room?

Yes, all of our inpatient rooms are private, with your own ensuite.

Can I go home earlier than 4 nights for a vaginal birth / 5 nights for a caesarean birth?

We understand that there are a number of reasons why you might like to go home earlier than your proposed discharge date. If you are considering an early discharge, please make sure that you discuss all options with your Obstetrician and midwives after your baby is born. Epworth Geelong have strict protocols in place to keep our patients, staff and hospital safe, so please don't feel like there is any pressure to leave early.

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. At Epworth Geelong, both inpatient or outpatient services are still available.

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

Yes, the parents of a newborn baby within our Special Care Nursery can keep visiting however our restrictions on other family members remain, including siblings.

Am I able to walk around the ward with my baby or will I stay in my private room?

We encourage our patients and their partners to stay in their room during their admission. The only exception to this will be for parents visiting their baby in our Special Care Nursery.

Can my family and friends visit me at home?

We understand that it is very disappointing not being able to have your family and friends meet your new baby straight away, however it is important that you adhere to Government guidelines on the restrictions in your area.

These guidelines are changing regularly, so it's important that you monitor any changes.

How will I know if the Epworth Geelong's position on around COVID-19 testing, partners/support person access or visitor restrictions change?

In addition to your antenatal appointments with Geelong Maternity Group, an Epworth midwife will call you at around the 35-36 week mark of your pregnancy to check in and prepare you for your hospital admission. During this call, they will take the time to provide the latest information, answer questions that you have and discuss any additional tests required for yourself or your partner / support person prior to your baby's birth.

The latest COVID-19 information for maternity patients can also be found at [Epworth.org.au](https://www.epworth.org.au) [here](#)

We look forward to welcoming you to Epworth Geelong.

If you have any queries about your stay, please don't hesitate to call maternity services on 5271 8322 and for medical concerns please speak with your doctor or call our birth suite.