

Information for birthing partners

This leaflet is to provide information for those who have been chosen by an expectant mother to be a birthing partner during her labour.

Introduction

We know that being invited to be a birthing partner can be both an exciting and perhaps a frightening experience for you. It may be that you have been present at a birth before and you are quite comfortable with what to expect, but if not, this leaflet is intended to help you understand why the staff ask you to do (or not to do) certain things whilst you are in the Maternity Unit. No more than 2 birthing partners (who must be the same 2 who arrive with the wife/partner in labour) will be allowed in the unit whilst labour is in progress and no other visitors allowed until your wife/partner has been discharged onto a postnatal ward. We have no childcare facilities within the Maternity unit, so any birth partner under the age of 18 will need to be supervised by a responsible adult in the event of an emergency.

Car parking

Please park in the pay and display multi-storey car park in Craven Road. You will have to pay initially, but you can obtain a concessionary permit for the day that your baby is born from the midwife if your partner is admitted to the Maternity Unit. If both birthing partners arrive in separate cars, then only one will be entitled to a concessionary permit, and this will only be valid whilst your wife/partner is in labour, once they are admitted to the postnatal ward parking must be paid for.

The area up the ramp immediately outside the Maternity Unit is for dropping off only and wait time is limited to 30 minutes in one of the marked bays. If you park elsewhere, you may prevent ambulances and senior medical staff from attending an emergency.

Video entry phones

These are at every ward door in the Maternity Unit. We realise that they might be seen as a nuisance, but they are intended to keep both women and new babies safe from unwanted intrusion, theft of personal items and even possible abduction. We would ask that you keep trips through the doors to a minimum. Every time the door bell rings, a member of staff has to answer it, and that could mean a midwife being interrupted from caring for women in labour.

Telephone calls

Please do **not** use your mobile phone to make calls in the ward or corridor areas within the Maternity unit, as they can trigger some medical equipment and cause malfunctions as well as blocking access in the case of any emergency situation. There are pay phones on all landings and Patient-Call cards can be purchased for use on both Iffley and Marsh Wards. You may, of course, use your mobile phone outside of the ward areas in the general public areas of the hospital.

We ask that you discourage other relatives or friends from telephoning Delivery Suite for 'progress' updates. We are not allowed to give out this sort of confidential information by telephone to anyone

Food and drinks

Whilst your partner is in labour it is important for you to keep up your drinks and snacks, as a low blood sugar makes people more prone to fainting, and if you are very hungry you may find it difficult to be as supportive as you would like to be. The NHS does not provide meals for family members, but there are shops, vending machines and various hot food outlets around the hospital site where you can go for a meal break, or you can bring in your own picnic type food in a chiller bag. We have no facilities to store food in refrigerators on either Delivery Suite or the Midwifery-led Birth Unit. If your partner is having your baby in theatre it is VITAL that you have eaten before accompanying her as many people feel very faint in an operating theatre, and if you pass out, you will miss the birth of the baby.

Delivery by Caesarean birth, or an assisted vaginal delivery in theatre

There is a one in four chance that the baby will be born in the Maternity theatre suite. Birthing partners are welcome, but we can only allow one person to accompany the mother. You will be asked to change into theatre pyjamas and footwear. Other than underwear and head coverings worn for religious reasons, no other clothing is permitted. You may bring a camera and a wallet into theatre, but other personal possessions should be left where the midwife advises you to store them.

When you are in theatre, it is important that you listen to what the doctors and midwives ask you to do. Usually, we will ask you to sit on a seat at your partner's side. A lot of sterile equipment will need to be opened and some members of the team will be dressed in sterile clothing. If you accidentally bump into these people or equipment, we will then have to open a new set, which causes delays as well as being very expensive.

We understand that you are concerned for your partner and the baby, so if you feel scared or unwell, please say so, and someone will escort you out of theatre to a quieter place.

Very rarely, we may need to ask you to leave theatre. If this happens, someone will escort you to another room and explain what is happening. A senior member of the team will

discuss events with you as soon as they are able to do so, but care of the mother and baby are our first priority.

You are welcome to discuss any of the above information prior to the birth.

After the birth of the baby

Most mothers and babies will remain on the Delivery Suite for three hours or so before being transferred to the postnatal wards. Mothers who give birth on Rushey Ward usually stay a little longer, but most are discharged home from there, and not transferred to a postnatal bed. Whilst we are very happy for you to accompany your new family to the ward, it is usual for you to leave them so that everyone can get some rest. If there are particular reasons why a partner needs to stay, we will endeavour to accommodate this, but generally we anticipate that partners will be visiting between 9am and 9pm, with the exception of the two hour rest period between 1 and 3pm every day.

This document can be made available in other languages and formats upon request.

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Author: Jane Siddall, Consultant in Feto Maternal Medicine, August 2005

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