

Chaperones – information for women and partners

This leaflet is to provide information on the use of chaperones within the Trust.

What is a chaperone?

A chaperone is an adult who is present during an intimate examination of a patient. In Maternity Services an 'intimate' examination would cover examination of either the breasts or an internal examination. The chaperone should not be a relative, partner or friend of the patient, and is employed within the health service in a clinical capacity, often in a nursing support or student role. A chaperone is there to protect both the woman and the doctor or midwife from allegations of inappropriate behaviour. They may also be asked to assist the doctor or midwife with equipment needed during the examination, such as gloves, gels etc.

The NHS, the British Medical Association, the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and the Royal College of Midwives all recommend that chaperones are routinely available during the intimate examination of a patient.

What about my privacy?

The chaperone will have had training about maintaining confidentiality and will also know what is, and what is not, necessary during this type of examination.

Can my partner, relative or friend act as a chaperone?

You can choose to have your partner, relative or friend with you during any examinations. It can be helpful to think about whether you and they will feel comfortable about this. Also, there could be matters that you would prefer to discuss confidentially with your midwife or doctor. You have the right to ask for a chaperone to be provided by the hospital, and this can be a helpful thing when you want extra support during an examination but would prefer not to have your partner, relative or friend in the room.

What if I (or my partner) do not want a chaperone to be present?

The absence of a chaperone should only be with the agreement of both the woman and the doctor/midwife. During intimate examination of a patient of the opposite sex to a doctor, a chaperone should always be present.

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

Written by: Jane Siddall, June 2008
Reviewed: December 2018
Approved: Maternity Information Group & Patient Information Manager, January 2019
Review due: January 2021