

COVID-19 Alert levels 3 and 4

Information for pregnant women and whānau: updated 18 August 2021

This information is subject to change according to Ministry of Health updates.

See Ministry of Health [Information for pregnant women, and those who have recently given birth](#), for further information.

Midwifery care for women during Alert Levels 3 and 4

This advice is specific to COVID-19 Alert Levels 3 and 4 which requires everyone, including pregnant women and their families, to stay at home – unless they either require or provide an essential service (level 4) or safe service/business (level 3).

Alert level 4

- People instructed to stay at home (in their bubble) other than for essential personal movement.
- Businesses closed except for essential services. Midwifery is an essential service.
- Physical distancing of 2m outside home (including on public transport).
- To wear masks in public places and when visiting essential services.

Alert level 3

- People are instructed to stay home in their bubble other than for essential personal movement – including to go to work, school if they have to, or for local recreation.
- Physical distancing of 2m outside home (including on public transport), or 1m in controlled environments like schools and workplaces.
- To wear masks in public places and when visiting essential services.
- People must stay within their immediate household bubble, but can expand this to reconnect with close family/whānau, or bring in caregivers, or support isolated people. This extended bubble should remain exclusive.
- Healthcare services use virtual, non-contact consultations where possible.

Pregnancy care

I am pregnant – can I still access midwifery/maternity care?

Yes, midwifery care is classed as an essential health service because you will still need to have access to maternity care. During Alert Levels 3 and 4 midwives are changing the way they work to minimise physical contact time and keep you and themselves safe. Your community midwife (Lead Maternity Carer/LMC) will continue to be your maternity care provider responsible for your maternity care co-ordination and will liaise with hospital services as necessary.

Can I still see my midwife regularly during alert levels 3 and 4?

Under alert levels 3 and 4 everyone is required to stay at home unless they need an essential service (level 4) or safe service/business (level 3). Having midwifery care is considered an essential service. However, in order to support social distancing and keep you and the midwife safe the midwife will

contact you by phone or video call and discuss your health and that of the baby. She may determine that she needs to see you physically to do things like checking your blood pressure and checking the baby's growth. If this is the case she will organise to either see you in her clinic or she may come to your home.

My midwife wants to see me face to face – will this be safe?

Yes, the midwife will limit the time of face to face consultation to 15 minutes or less and ensure physical distancing (keeping more than 1m - 2m away) during the consultation except for when she needs to be briefly in direct physical contact, for example when checking your blood pressure. She will wash her hands before and after she has checked your blood pressure and palpated your baby. She will also disinfect all surfaces and equipment before and after your visit. You will be asked to wear a face mask during the consultation.

Should my midwife wear Personal Protective Equipment during the visit?

The Ministry of Health advises that masks must be worn by everyone over 12 years old when accessing or providing essential services in Alert level 4. Your midwife will wear a mask and may wear other PPE, depending on your situation. Full PPE, which consists of face mask, gloves, eye protection, and a protective disposable gown, and midwives follow Ministry of Health advice on when to use this.

I have just found out I am pregnant, can I still register for maternity care with an LMC midwife?

Yes, the midwife can take many of your details over the phone and provide you with advice related to caring for yourself in early pregnancy. She will discuss with you when the best time for a face to face visit would be – dependent on how many weeks pregnant you are. This may be after the COVID-19 alert level 3 or 4 has been lifted.

When should I contact my midwife?

The following practical advice may be helpful:

If you have an urgent problem related to your pregnancy but not related to COVID-19, get in touch using the same contact details you already have for your midwife.

If you have symptoms suggestive of COVID-19 (cough, high temperature (at least 38°C), shortness of breath, sore throat, sneezing and runny nose, temporary loss of smell), you should contact **Healthline on 0800 358 5453** or your GP in the first instance. Also contact your midwife to inform her. Your midwife will discuss options for your midwifery care. You should **not attend** a routine clinic or request your midwife visit you at home if you are unwell until you have discussed this with your midwife.

For women suspected to have come into contact with COVID-19, contact **Healthline on 0800 358 5453** or your GP for advice on testing.

For women with suspected or confirmed COVID-19:

- Inform your midwife of your situation
- Your midwife will make a plan with you about your ongoing care. Some appointments may be conducted on the telephone or using videoconferencing.
- Personal protective equipment will need to be worn by any health care providers looking after you.

- In this situation the midwife will liaise with the hospital and your care may be transferred to the hospital maternity team.

What do I do if I feel unwell or I'm worried about my baby during the COVID 19 alert levels 3 or 4?

If you have concerns about the wellbeing of yourself or your baby during alert level 3 or 4 contact your midwife or your maternity team. They will provide further advice, including whether you need to attend hospital.

If you are advised to attend the maternity unit or hospital, pregnant women are requested to travel by private transport, and alert the maternity reception once on the premises, prior to entering the hospital.

Labour and birth care

Will my LMC midwife still provide my care during labour and birth?

Yes, as long as you are well then your midwife or midwife team will continue to provide care during your labour and birth.

I am worried about COVID-19, where is the best place to birth during this time?

This is a decision that you should discuss with your midwife. Generally midwives would offer the option birthing in a primary unit or at home for well women with uncomplicated pregnancies and recommend women who have medical indications birth in hospital. However, this will also depend on whether you have any symptoms of being unwell or if you have COVID-19 infection. Other considerations include if you work at the border, have travelled overseas recently, or if you have been contacted by the Public Health Unit because of possible contact with someone who has Covid-19. Please discuss your individual circumstances with your midwife.

I planned to give birth in a primary unit – can I still do this when we all have to stay at home and keep our social distance?

Yes, if you have planned a primary unit birth and are not required to be in self-isolation/quarantine for exposure to risk factors, or suspected or confirmed COVID-19 then you can continue to plan to birth in a primary unit.

My baby is due and I have just been told that my daughter has been in contact with a COVID-19 positive person. I was booked to have a home birth - what are my options now?

You will be contacted by the Public Health Unit who will provide advice on what you are required to do in this situation. This may affect your place of birth. You should discuss your options with your midwife. Wherever you birth, your midwife will need to wear full personal protective equipment. If you have any symptoms or are found to be COVID-19 positive then you will need to go to your local maternity hospital for the birth. You may be asked to wear a face mask whilst in the hospital.

Childcare and support during labour: Alert levels 3 and 4

I am planning to birth in a maternity facility. My partner will be with me for labour support. We had planned that my mother would provide care for my other children – can we still do this?

Yes, in the [following circumstances](#).

Level 4

- The person who plans to provide care for the children essentially becomes an extension of the woman's social distancing household group, or 'bubble'.
- This group must remain the same for the whole alert level 4 period
- The carer should not care for children from other households/families (other than their own) over the same period
- If a child or carer becomes unwell, they must stay at home and should not provide the child care
- It is recommended that child carers are not aged over 70 years old or at higher risk of COVID-19 complications due to other medical conditions.

Level 3

- People must stay within their immediate household bubble, but can expand this to reconnect with close family / whānau, or bring in caregivers, or support isolated people. This extended bubble should remain exclusive.

Care during birth

Will there be any changes due to physical distancing in how I give birth?

No, you should discuss a birth plan with your midwife and this should be followed as closely as possible based on your wishes.

Can I still use a birthing pool during labour and birth?

Yes, labouring in water supports women to manage pain during labour and birth.

Can I still consider using Entonox during labour to help me with managing the pain of labour?

Ask your midwife about the availability of Entonox (gas and air) for birth in a maternity facility.

Can I still use an epidural or a spinal block if I need one to help manage the pain of labour?

Yes, an epidural or spinal block will be available as usual if you give birth in a maternity hospital.

Care following birth

Can I still have skin to skin with my baby following the birth?

Yes all usual care will continue as per your birth plan

Will I be able to have visitors following the birth if I stay in hospital?

Many hospitals are limiting visitors to the hospital to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19. Many maternity hospitals are now limiting visitors following birth too and in most cases you will not be allowed any visitors during your postnatal stay. In some cases you may be able to have one visitor during this time. Check with your midwife and your local maternity facility to find out their recommendations.

I have just been discharged from hospital and my baby is a few days old, will my midwife come to see me?

Your midwife will contact you by phone or video calling to talk about your health and wellbeing and your baby's health. She will organise to see you face to face to assist with breastfeeding if you need physical support, undertake an assessment of your health, and do screening tests, a full baby examination and weigh your baby.