

COVID-19 Alert level 2

Information for pregnant women and whānau: updated 20 May 2020

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

Midwifery care at alert level 2

Pregnancy care

I have just found out I am pregnant, when can I register for maternity care with a midwife?

It is recommended that you register with a midwife early in your pregnancy. Once you find out you are pregnant, start looking for a midwife. You can ask friends and family for a recommendation or go to www.findyourmidwife.co.nz to see pictures, profiles and availability details for midwives in your area. Early pregnancy care is important to undertake a health history and provide you with information about healthy pregnancy and options for tests and scans, as well as providing you with prescriptions for folic acid and iodine supplements if you are not already taking these.

I have been having a mixture of phone/video calls and face to face visits during lockdown.

Will this continue under alert level 2?

During Alert Level 2 midwives will begin to move back to normal in-person appointments, initially for booking visits and third trimester appointments. You may still be offered some appointments by phone or video call but your midwife will see you if a physical check-up is needed.

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

Yes. We have moved to alert level 2 because the risk of the virus passing between people in the community is low, and the midwife will continue with important infection prevention practices. The midwife will wash her hands frequently and clean all equipment and surfaces before and after your visit. You may be asked to wear a face mask during the consultation if you have any cold or flu symptoms.

Should my midwife wear personal protective equipment during the visit?

The Ministry of Health advises that personal protective equipment (PPE) is not required in every situation. Depending on your situation, in some cases midwives may wear personal protection. Full PPE, which consists of face mask, eye protection, protective disposable gown and gloves, is only required for women who have tested as COVID-19 positive or who are unwell. In this situation the midwife will be in contact with the hospital and your care may be transferred to the hospital maternity team for labour and birth.

When should I contact my midwife?

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.

What should I do if I have cold or flu-like symptoms?

Now that we are heading into winter and also moving around more under alert level 2, there will be more chances of picking up colds or flu. The symptoms of colds and flu are very similar to the symptoms that indicate a reason to be tested for COVID-19. If you have any of these symptoms, you need to be tested at any stage of pregnancy, and especially if you are close to your due date:

- cough
- sore throat
- shortness of breath
- head cold symptoms e.g. runny nose, sneezing, post-nasal drip
- loss of sense of smell
- fever

If any members of your household have any of these symptoms, they should also be tested.

How do I get a COVID-19 test?

In many areas, you can self-refer to a community-based testing centre (CBAC) for a test, or you can be referred by your GP or Healthline (0800 358 5453). You also need to contact your midwife to inform her you have been tested. You should **not attend** a routine clinic or request your midwife visit you at home if you are unwell or have had a test until you have discussed this with your midwife.

There are now very few people being diagnosed with COVID-19 because we have been effective with physical distancing. It is important to continue with physical distancing.

If your test result is negative, you are usually considered not to have COVID-19 but you should stay at home until 48 hours after your symptoms resolve, to avoid spreading colds or influenza in the community.

If you go into labour with any of these symptoms and have not had a recent test, the health practitioners providing your care may need to treat you as a suspected case. They will wear personal protective equipment including gloves, a mask, an apron or gown, and goggles or a visor when they provide your labour care. For some women, having symptoms may mean needing to change your planned place of birth; and labour care may be provided by the hospital midwives rather than your community midwife.

What should I do if I test positive for COVID-19?

If your test result is positive, the public health unit will contact you to find out about any close contacts that also need to be tested and to talk about your health care.

If you test positive for COVID-19, you need to contact your midwife or midwifery team to make them aware of your diagnosis. If you have no symptoms, or mild symptoms, you will be advised to recover at home. If you have more severe symptoms, you might be treated in hospital. If you have COVID-19 when you go into labour, you will need to go into a maternity hospital to give birth.

For more information on COVID-19 infection during pregnancy and birth, see our [frequently asked questions](#) on midwifery care for women who are in self-isolation/quarantine.

Labour and birth care

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

Your community midwife will continue to provide care during your labour and birth in most circumstances. For women with suspected COVID-19 a plan is made between you, your midwife and the hospital about the most appropriate midwife to provide care. For women with confirmed COVID-19 at the time of labour and birth, your care will be provided by the hospital midwives.

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 recommend well women with uncomplicated pregnancies birth in a primary unit or at home. However, if you have suspected or confirmed COVID-19 hospital birth is most appropriate. The Ministry of Health has produced guidelines on where women can birth who are in self-isolation/quarantine in these circumstances:

Options for planned place of birth

	Well women, not in quarantine/self-isolation	Women in quarantine/self-isolation and well/asymptomatic	Women who are unwell: suspect case	Woman with confirmed or probable COVID-19
Home	✓	This decision needs to be made in discussion between the woman and the midwife and may or may not be possible	✗	✗
Primary birthing unit	✓	✗	✗	✗
Hospital	✓	✓	✓	✓

My baby is due and I have just been told that my daughter has been in contact with a COVID-19 positive person. What does this mean for me?

Women whose children have been identified as close contacts of a COVID-19 case are also required to be in self-isolation/quarantine. 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. 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.

My partner is in self-quarantine for exposure to risk factors, or suspected or confirmed COVID-19 and we are expecting our baby any day now - can my partner remain with me during my labour and birth in hospital?

No. Unfortunately, your partner is in self-isolation/quarantine which means they are considered a potential COVID 19 risk and therefore cannot come to the maternity unit with you.

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?

Yes, Entonox will still be available to you at this time.

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 and maternity units are limiting visitors to the hospital to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19. Under alert level 2, visiting is allowed, but there may be a limit on the number of visitors you can have or the length of time they can stay. 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?

Yes. Your midwife will see you at home for your postnatal care in most circumstances. Postnatal care includes health and wellbeing checks for you and your baby, providing breastfeeding support, performing screening tests, undertaking a full baby examination and weighing your baby.