

Frequently Asked Questions: Cardiac Antenatal Support

In light of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, you may have specific questions about your delivery and care taking place at St Thomas' and Evelina London Children's Hospital.

You can find the answers to the most frequently asked questions below.

Please note that things are constantly changing and you should take advice from your Midwife and refer to Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust Maternity [page](#).

I will be delivering a baby at St Thomas' Hospital who has been diagnosed prenatally with Congenital Heart Disease, what precautions should I take before my delivery, with the Coronavirus pandemic in mind?

The guidelines are changing rapidly so always go with most up to date information from the Midwives. This information is also available on the Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust [Maternity Services](#) page. Pregnant women over 28 weeks gestation are advised to isolate and adhere to social distancing where possible and only go outside for essential exercise and shopping etc. Please do not see anyone outside of your household. Some appointments will be changed to Virtual. When you come in for appointments you must attend alone. All staff will be in PPE to protect you.

Can I attend the ECHO cardiac antenatal class in person?

The ECHO cardiac antenatal classes are being done via Zoom, you will be contacted directly by the Tower Team and invited to the class most relevant to your delivery date.

Can I attend scans and check-ups with my birth

partner or friend/relative?

Unfortunately not. The Fetal Cardiology department is allowing one person in with you as they have single rooms, however for all other appointments in clinic/FMU you must attend alone.

Will my community care change before and after birth, in light of the Coronavirus pandemic?

Yes. Your local hospital might be doing things slightly differently so we advise you check with them too.

If Guys and St Thomas' is not your local hospital, you will be expected to continue routine midwifery and growth scans checks with your local. We have made certain appointments virtual, often the 16 week, 25 week, 34 week and 38 week appointments.

Please take advice from your midwife as your pattern of care may differ depending on your own medical history.

How long is my birth partner allowed to stay in hospital after the baby is born?

Your birth partner can stay for 6 hours or until you are transferred to the Postnatal Ward, whichever is first. They are also not allowed to stay during your Induction. They will be able to join once you are in active Labour and during the birth.

If after giving birth I am unwell or have reduced mobility (e.g. after a caesarean section) - is my birthing partner allowed to stay for longer?

The mode of delivery doesn't change how long your partner can stay.

We understand the need for extra support after a difficult delivery/caesarean section and we have plenty of midwifery and support staff on the wards to help you with all your needs.

Is my birthing partner allowed to visit my baby

in the neonatal unit, if I am still in recovery and on the postnatal ward?

Yes. Your partner can go with baby to the neonatal unit after birth. Only one parent can be with the baby at any one time so you will have to take it in turns.

No other visitors/children/family members are permitted.

Is there anywhere for parents to stay overnight onsite whilst our baby is in the neonatal unit?

If you do not live in London then we will be able to provide accommodation for you and your partner.

Your partner can stay there whilst you are being induced and join you when you are in labour. They can then return there once you have delivered.

You will then be discharged to the same accommodation once fit for discharge. This should be a double room with a shared kitchen and shared bathrooms. You can both stay there until baby is discharged.

Will cardiac babies stay in the neonatal unit, or will they be moved to PICU or Savannah Ward straight away?

This depends on the cardiac condition and hasn't changed with Covid-19. Babies tend to stay on the Neonatal unit until surgery/procedure day. At this point they go to PICU.

They then stay in PICU until recovered enough to go to Savannah. This is decided on a case by case basis so may be different for your baby.

Is there anywhere for parents to stay overnight on the Savannah Ward or PICU at the current time?

1 parent can stay overnight on Savannah - we recommend this is the mother to establish feeding.

At present only 1 parent can be with baby at any time, this is both in the Neonatal Unit and in all areas

of the Evelina.

Your partner can continue to stay in the arranged accommodation until baby is discharged.

Have there been any changes to the birthing and delivery suites as they are currently outlined on the GSTT website?

There are less side rooms as some have been converted to infection control rooms.

You may spend time in a bay with other women. If this is during Induction - it will be other women being induced. If this is postnatally, it will be with other women whose babies are also in the Neonatal Unit. You will never be in a bay with women and their babies.

How can I, as the named parent in hospital, communicate with my partner and family - does the hospital provide phones/iPads or similar?

You will be expected to bring your own phones/ipads and chargers. There is Wifi in the Hospital but it isn't always the strongest.

Staff will not give out any information about you or baby to anyone over the phone, even your partner. You will have to inform family members/friends with any updates yourself.

Are all parent rooms/garden suite etc. still open within Evelina London and St Thomas' Hospital?

At St Thomas' most parent rooms/open spaces are closed and have been reconfigured. There is still space to heat food/fridges etc but not space to sit.

You will be expected to stay by baby's bedside if you are in visiting them. The expressing room is open but limited to 1 woman at a time.

What happens if I (an expectant mother) test

positive for Coronavirus (COVID-19) and I'm due to give birth very soon?

If you test positive you will need to isolate for 7 days and anyone in the house will need to isolate for 14 days.

Please alert the Hospital immediately if you are positive and coming in either in an emergency or for a planned procedure. You will be asked to call again on arrival in the car park. A Midwife in full PPE will come down and meet you, provide you with accurate PPE, and escort you to the ward.

You will be cared for in an Isolation Room. Staff will be wearing full PPE. If your partner is asymptomatic, and you are in Labour, then they can also attend and will be given PPE to wear. They must stay in the room with you and cannot come and go.

You will have extra monitoring and further screening done.

You will not be permitted to visit baby on the Neonatal Unit until you have a Negative screen or have isolated and are asymptomatic for 14 days.

What happens if my partner has tested positive for Coronavirus (COVID-19) - when will they be allowed to visit the baby in hospital?

If your partner is positive, they will not be able to attend until they have a negative swab or have isolated and are asymptomatic for 14 days.

They will not be able to visit baby as above.

Is there anything I should or shouldn't take to hospital at the moment, because of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic?

You can bring the same items you would normally bring for your stay.

Can my partner remain with me (the mother)

whilst my baby has heart surgery or treatment?

If you are discharged then you can both be in the accommodation whilst baby is having surgery, there is no longer a parent's waiting area.

You will get a phone call to inform you once surgery is completed and baby is in recovery.

Unfortunately if you are on the Postnatal Ward, your partner will not be permitted to visit or stay.

How can I connect with other parents expecting a child with a heart condition or people who have been through it?

You can join ECHO as a member, for free, which immediately gives you access to the charity's closed Facebook community group. You can share experiences, ask questions and speak to other parents whose child has been diagnosed with a heart condition. Join at: echo-uk.org/join