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 their 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 while you are in the Maternity Unit. We ask that:

1. The number of birthing partners on is limited to two. This helps both the labouring woman and the professionals form a small and supportive group during the birthing process and in the event of an emergency the team will have space to give the appropriate care..
2. Other family members and friends do not ask to visit during labour and stay at home until the new family has been transferred to the postnatal ward. There is no waiting area for family members that are not birth partners.
3. The same two birthing partners will only be allowed in when labour is in progress.

Car parking

The area up the ramp immediately outside the Maternity Unit is for dropping off and collection only. In emergency situations (for example; partner in labour, birth imminent) please park in one of the two spaces without bollards. Please inform a member of the maternity team if you are unable to move your car to a permanent parking location as soon as you are able. In emergency situations, you will be given a form from the intrapartum area to display on your dashboard/window. Cars without this form or without a staff permit will be given a ticket by the parking team if the vehicle is left unattended.

Please be aware that emergency vehicles such as ambulances and the emergency on-call staff cars must be able to pull into their designated bays at all times.

We can give one free parking permit to the birth partners of each birthing person. This is valid for parking in visitor car parks only (multi-storey levels 0-3, North Block, Endoscopy). A member of staff will electronically validate your parking for the birth of your baby(s). This permit is only valid for time spent in the induction suite and during labour. Once the baby is born and the birth partner leaves, any return visits will need to be paid for.

In non-emergent situations, please park in visitor areas only, for example for ultrasound scans and routine appointments.

Video entry phones

We have these at every ward entry as they are intended to keep both women and new babies safe from unwanted intrusion, theft of personal items and even possible abduction. We realise

these may seem an inconvenience, having to wait to be ‘buzzed in and out,’ so it is sensible to keep the number of trips off the ward to a small number. We do not have a receptionist at the delivery suite so please bear with us as it is clinical staff that are answering the bell.

Telephone calls

Please remember to bring your chargers! If you need to make or receive calls, please leave the birthing room, but do not chat in the corridors as you may get in the way of an emergency. Please step out of the ward, or better still, ask family and friends in advance not to expect hourly updates.

Staff are not permitted to give information to anyone who phones the wards as we have no way of confirming their identity. We are bound by legal requirements to maintain patient confidentiality.

Food and drinks

While your partner is in labour it is important for you to keep hydrated and to eat, 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 the baby is going to be born 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 the mother’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 the mother 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. 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 unless you have been allocated a bed in the family bay. If there are particular reasons why a partner needs to stay, we will endeavour to accommodate this so please speak with the midwife in charge of the ward.

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

J Siddall, RBFT Consultant Obstetrician August 2005
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Our Maternity Strategy and Vision

'Working together with women, birthing people and families to offer compassionate, supportive care and informed choice; striving for equity and excellence in our maternity service.'

You can read our maternity strategy here