

Buckinghamshire NHS Trust Maternity in line with national guidance is now offering COVID-19 swab testing to birthing individuals being admitted into their maternity units.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who will be offered a test?

Testing is being offered to all individuals admitted. This includes all individuals who attend either antenatally and require admission or individuals in spontaneous labour in a midwife led unit or labour ward

Tests are also being offered 72 hours prior to any planned induction of labour or planned caesarean section.

I am planning on having a home birth – will I be tested?

Individuals birthing at home are not tested as they are not exposing the wider public to the virus – it is important however that they are considerate of the infection risk to their midwife and let them know if you or any member of your household has symptoms.

Will my birth partner be offered a test?

No – your birth partner will not be tested as we are currently only testing patients (birthing individuals). If you are having a caesarean section your birth partner will be asked to wear a surgical mask

What does the test involve?

A midwife, doctor or maternity care support worker will take your swab. A long cotton bud like swab is used to collect saliva from the back of your throat and nose. (this is the same swab – throat first and then nose)

When will the test be offered?

If you are booked for a planned induction of labour, or a caesarean section, the test will be offered at least 72 hours prior to your planned admission to hospital. If you go into spontaneous labour, the test will be offered on arrival at the maternity unit. If you need to be admitted to hospital for any other reason the test will be offered on arrival.

How long do the results take to come back?

Usually a maximum of 48hrs though it may be quicker than this.

How will I find out my results?

Planned admissions

If you are a planned admission for induction of labour or caesarean section you will be contacted with your test result before you are admitted.

If you have a positive result it is unlikely that your planned date of admission will change. You will be contacted by a doctor and a plan of care discussed which will be in line with RCOG Coronavirus (COVID 19) Infection and Pregnancy Guidance. <https://www.rcog.org.uk/coronavirus-pregnancy>

Unplanned (non-elective admissions)

Whilst in hospital

If you are still an inpatient when your result is back – you will be informed of the result by the midwife or doctor. If the result is positive your care will be planned in accordance with RCOG Coronavirus (COVID 19) Infection and Pregnancy Guidance

Follow up – after discharge

If you are discharged before the test result is available and the result is negative you will not be contacted – most individuals will have been discharged by the time the result is available. You can ask your community midwife to check the result to confirm it is negative if you wish

If the result is positive you will be telephoned; informed of the positive result by a midwife or doctor and provided with a plan of care in accordance with RCOG Coronavirus (COVID 19) Infection and Pregnancy Guidance

Is the test compulsory?

The swab test is strongly recommended but remains your choice

Does the test hurt?

The test is a little uncomfortable but is taken quickly – a few seconds per swab

What happens if I decline the test?

You will still be admitted to hospital and your care will remain unchanged, though if you are exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 we will care for you in line with national recommended infection control and obstetric guidelines

What happens if I test positive?

If your test result is positive before your birth, or you have symptoms of COVID-19 and your test result has not come back yet, you will be cared for in a single room on the labour ward. If you are having a vaginal birth you will be recommended continuous monitoring of baby during your labour. You will also be advised that a water birth is not recommended due to a small infection risk to your baby and staff.

If you are having an induction of labour or a caesarean section it is unlikely your admission date will change, but you will be contacted by a doctor and a plan of care discussed prior to admission

If your test result has been positive and you are still pregnant you will be advised to follow government guidelines regarding self-isolating/ given advice on observing for symptoms and a follow up scan of your baby's growth will be arranged for 14 days later

If you are still being cared for in hospital postnatally and receive a positive result your care is not likely to change but you may be moved to a different area

If you are postnatal and have been discharged from hospital you will be contacted by a member of the midwifery team and advised to follow government guidelines regarding self-isolating/ given advice on observing for symptoms in you, your baby or member of your household.

Will staff be wearing PPE ?

All staff caring for you will be wearing personal protective equipment in line with national guidelines regardless of your result. Some situations require more enhance PPE such as in theatre, in the second or third stage of labour, neonatal resuscitation

If you are having a homebirth staff will be wearing PPE at homebirths and community midwifery visits

Can I still breast/chestfeed my baby if I test positive?

Yes – breast/chestfeeding is encouraged regardless of your test result. If you test positive and are symptomatic with a cough, you may be advised to wear a mask or face covering while feeding your baby and good hand hygiene is important for ongoing wellbeing.

If I have to be admitted to hospital after the birth of my baby will I be offered another test?

Yes – you will be offered a test at any admission to hospital

Why are you offering this test now?

Bucks Healthcare Trust are following national guidance to expand screening for COVID-19 infection. This will enable them to contact and isolate/advise isolation to anyone affected and ensure you are offered care in line with national recommendations

Why is this necessary when many people will already be discharged home by the time their results are in?

This is to assist the national effort to track and contain the virus, as well as offer appropriate care for you where needed and also maintain the best possible infection protocols for everyone's protection.

We understand that this is a difficult and worrying time. If you have any further concerns or questions please contact your midwife who will be pleased to help you.