

Information for community-based midwives at Alert Level 1

15 June 2020

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance on preventing the spread of COVID-19 in home and community settings, and on protecting both pregnant and postnatal women, and their community-based Lead Maternity Carer midwives.

This information sheet should be read in conjunction with information available at health.govt.nz/covid-19

Symptoms and how COVID-19 is spread

For the latest information about COVID-19, the symptoms and how to prevent the spread visit About COVID-19 here: <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-health-advice-general-public/about-covid-19>

COVID-19, like the flu, can be spread from person to person. When a person who has COVID-19 coughs, sneezes or talks, they may spread droplets containing the virus a short distance which quickly settle on surrounding surfaces. Basic hygiene measures are the most important way to stop the spread of infections, including COVID-19. Visit protecting yourself and others for simple ways to protect yourself and others: <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-health-advice-general-public/protecting-yourself-and-others-covid-19>

Information for community-based midwives at Alert Level 1

Alert Level 1 represents a very low risk of COVID-19 exposure in the community, however as health professionals, midwives need to continue to be vigilant in public health measures. At Alert Level 1 the schedule for the provision of midwifery care for women should return to normal, where possible. This includes in-person midwifery care for all women.

Ensure you wear the appropriate personal protection equipment (PPE) for the woman's clinical picture. See the advice for using PPE and the poster for maternity use at health.govt.nz/ppe-health. If the COVID-19 status of the woman is unknown, ask the Alert Level 1: Risk assessment questions (at health.govt.nz/ppe-health) before contact with them if possible; otherwise maintain physical distancing of at least 1 metre while asking them. This will help determine what infection prevention and control precautions are needed.

The Midwifery Council of New Zealand acknowledges midwives have had to change the way they work during this pandemic. The Council reminds midwives they need to remain aware of the parameters around the midwifery scope of practice, and further, they must always work within the limits of their competence. Further advice is provided in the Council's statement on midwifery practice in national and international emergencies at midwiferycouncil.health.nz/about-us/publications/midwifery-council-statement-re-covid-19

Community-based midwifery care to healthy women during the period of COVID-19 pandemic

Community-based midwifery care for pregnant, labouring and postnatal women and their babies should continue. Pregnant and postnatal women appear no more susceptible to the consequences of COVID-19 infection than the general population.

The New Zealand College of Midwives have provided professional guidance for community-based midwives covering a wide range of COVID-19 issues at www.midwife.org.nz/midwives/covid-19/covid-19-information-for-lmcs/

Basic hygiene measures, including staying home when you are unwell, hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette, as well as regular cleaning of frequently touched surfaces, are the most important way to stop the spread of respiratory infections, including COVID-19.

Providing midwifery care to women who are probable or confirmed cases of COVID-19 or cases under investigation

Urgent midwifery care for these women and their babies should continue. The most appropriate place for the urgent assessment to take place might be your local DHB.

When an in-person visit is required, minimise time spent undertaking physical assessments.

Please note full PPE is required when caring for these women in-person. See recommendations on the PPE required for maternity at health.govt.nz/ppe-health

Ensure the woman wears a surgical mask until the midwife dons PPE, including a surgical mask. The woman can remove the face mask once the midwife has donned a surgical mask and additional PPE.

Non-urgent face to face midwifery consultations should be rescheduled until after the woman has fulfilled the criteria outlined by the local Public Health Unit, if possible.

A labour and birth care plan must be developed in collaboration with the woman, multi-disciplinary DHB team and the community midwife. If a transfer of clinical responsibility to the DHB team for labour and birth is required, the community midwife does not attend the labour and birth.

If a woman requires hospitalisation at any point during her pregnancy or postnatal period, due to the severity of her COVID-19 illness, her clinical care is transferred to the DHB team until the point of discharge home.

Refer to Table 1: Advice for community-based midwives caring for women who are probable, confirmed COVID-19 cases, or under investigation for COVID-19 at health.govt.nz/covid-19-maternity. This provides specific advice for care before and after 37 w0d, during labour and birth, and postnatally.

Providing midwifery care to those who have no new or worsening respiratory symptoms, but in the last 14 days have travelled overseas or had close contact with someone

else who has recently travelled overseas, or are a close contact of someone who is a probable or confirmed COVID-19 case

Community-based midwifery care for pregnant, labouring and postnatal women and their babies should continue. Standard Precautions should be used for all midwifery care. When required, additional precautions are needed to ensure midwives, and the women receiving in-person consultations are safe, particularly those who are more vulnerable to infection and severe illness.

Women who have been formally identified as having travelled overseas in the last 14 days or had close contact with someone else who has recently travelled overseas, or are a close contact of someone who is a probable or confirmed COVID-19 case need to fulfil the requirements of the local public health unit, regardless of whether they are symptomatic or asymptomatic for COVID-19.

Refer to Table 2: Providing midwifery care to those who have no new or worsening respiratory symptoms but in the last 14 days have travelled overseas or had close contact with someone else who has recently travelled overseas, or are a close contact of someone who is a probable or confirmed COVID-19 case at [health.govt.nz/covid-19-maternity](https://www.health.govt.nz/covid-19-maternity). This provides specific advice for care before and after 37w0d, during labour and birth, and postnatally.

In general, we recommend the following:

- reschedule any non-urgent appointments until after the woman has fulfilled the criteria outlined by the local public health unit, if possible
- conduct non-physical assessments, and pregnancy or parenting education, over the phone or via video call
- phone ahead to screen the woman for any symptoms of new or worsening respiratory illness and if she does, avoid visiting and recommend she contact Healthline
- When an in-person visit is required, minimise time spent undertaking physical assessments.
- Ensure the woman wears a surgical mask until the midwife dons PPE, including a surgical mask. The woman can remove the face mask once the midwife has donned a surgical mask and additional PPE as appropriate for the nature of care being provided (Refer to Table 2) see recommendations on the PPE required for maternity in-person consultations at [health.govt.nz/ppe-health](https://www.health.govt.nz/ppe-health)
- do not visit the pregnant or postnatal woman if you are feeling unwell.

Going to work

Community-based midwives must not go to work if they have:

- experienced cold or flu symptoms. Workers should be symptom free for 48 hours before returning to work
- returned from an overseas visit to any country in the last 14 days
- been in close contact with a confirmed or probable COVID-19 case in the last 14 days.

If you have provided care to a COVID-19 confirmed woman, or a woman who is symptomatic and is awaiting test results, but have followed all the recommended protective measures, you should continue to work normally.

If you develop symptoms you should phone Healthline on **0800 358 5453** or your doctor.

More information

For the latest advice, information and resources go to health.govt.nz/covid-19 or covid19.govt.nz

If you are symptomatic or are at risk of exposure call Healthline on **0800 358 5453**. It operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

If you have concerns about your health, speak to a doctor.