

# Obstetric high dependency unit (HDU)

St Mary's and Queen Charlotte's & Chelsea hospitals



Information for patients, relatives  
and carers

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## Our philosophy of care

Welcome to the obstetric high dependency unit (HDU). We provide a caring environment for pregnant women who become acutely (severely) ill either during or after giving birth.

Our aim is to provide high quality care that meets your individual physical and psychological needs, as well as the needs of your baby.

We provide care through a multidisciplinary team (MDT) approach with staff who are committed to maintaining high levels of professional development and education. On page 5 of this booklet, there is a full explanation of what MDT means and which members of staff may be involved in caring for you.

We aspire to deliver planned and structured care systematically in order to adhere to best clinical practice using evidence based research.

We believe that communication is key and we will keep you fully informed about your treatment by discussing all aspects of care with you and your partner.

Our core values of care are:

- **privacy**
- **dignity**
- **respect**
- **equality**
- **choice**

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## Admission

You will have been admitted to the obstetric high dependency unit because you are unwell or need close observation and monitoring for a specific reason. Specially trained midwives, obstetricians and anaesthetists will look after you while you are in this area.

Some women have planned admissions to the HDU because of complex medical conditions, whereas others may be admitted because of unexpected complications.

Our staff understand this is a stressful time for both you and your family. We will keep you well informed and will support and reassure you through any treatment that is recommended as part of your care.

Your baby will stay with you while you are in the HDU, unless there is a specific reason why they need to be cared for in the neonatal unit. Our team keeps in close contact with the neonatal staff to make sure you are always up-to-date with how your baby is doing.

## The high dependency environment

The high dependency unit is a specialised area within the delivery suite at both Queen Charlotte's & Chelsea and St Mary's hospitals. We use a wide range of equipment and monitoring devices to help and support the care we give.

We may need to connect you to several tubes and wires. This can look quite daunting. Please do not worry. These ensure we have the accurate information needed to manage your care. As you improve, the tubes and wires will be removed.

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You may find that the HDU can be noisy at times because of monitor and equipment alarms and being close to the labour rooms. We try to keep noise to a minimum as best we can.

Please be aware that there may be other women in the HDU. Every effort is made to protect the privacy and dignity of our women at all times.

## The high dependency team

The high dependency team includes several different professionals working together to care for you. This is what we mean by a multidisciplinary team (MDT) approach.

A team of midwives with specialist skills and knowledge will be caring for you and your baby. The midwives work on a one-to-two basis but, sometimes, this may be on a one-to-one basis if a woman is very unwell.

A consultant obstetrician and anaesthetist will manage your care. They will be accompanied by junior members of their team in ward rounds and reviews throughout your stay.

There may also be input from the following teams and staff:

- obstetric medicine team
- pharmacist
- physiotherapy
- medical / surgical teams (where appropriate)
- dietitian
- neonatologist for conditions related to your baby
- hospital religious staff if desired

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## Transfer from high dependency

Once your condition has improved, you will be transferred to the appropriate maternity ward with a care plan. Any decision to transfer is based on clinical factors and is made jointly by the obstetricians, anaesthetists and midwives.

In certain circumstances, you may be transferred to the intensive care unit (ICU) or another specific ward where more appropriate care can be provided for you. You will still have input from the obstetric and midwifery team even if you are transferred outside of the maternity ward. This is to ensure that if more advanced care is needed it can be given in the correct environment. We will always keep you informed about this.

At Queen Charlotte's & Chelsea Hospital, if you are transferred, midwives in the Stanley Clayton ward will care for your baby. Partners or family members can visit the baby at any time throughout the day.

At St Mary's Hospital, midwives in the nursery on the postnatal ward will care for your baby. A room can sometimes be provided for partners or family members to stay and care for the baby with help from the midwives.

When possible, your baby can be taken to the intensive care unit to spend time with you, if the intensive care staff think this is appropriate.

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## Visiting

Visiting hours are restricted to between **08.00 and 20.00** to make sure that you and your baby get rest, are not exposed to the risk of infection and that your safety, dignity and privacy are protected.

We kindly ask that you and your visitors respect our policy. Changes to this can be made after discussion and at the discretion of the obstetric HDU midwife.

Our recommendations are (as per the delivery suite visiting policy):

- only two visitors are allowed at the bedside at a time
- no continual swapping of visitors throughout the day
- unfortunately, because HDU is a high risk area, we cannot allow children under the age of 16 to visit the unit
- partners are allowed on the unit from 08.00

We suggest that the other visitor comes later in the day allowing doctors to carry out their ward rounds confidentially. We may ask visitors to sit in the waiting room during the ward rounds.

We highly recommend that partners go home overnight and rest, and that other visitors wait until you have been transferred out of the HDU to come and see you. It is very important that you have as much rest as possible.

We thank you for respecting our policy. If you wish to discuss any of these points further please speak to a member of the HDU team.

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## Infection prevention and control

To protect you from the risk of cross infection, we ask that **all partners and visitors wash their hands and use alcohol hand rub when entering and leaving the HDU.**

We ask that partners and visitors do not sit on or put their feet up on the bed. Chairs will be provided.

If your partner or visitor has been unwell with a cold, flu, vomiting and diarrhoea or any other illness, we advise that they do not visit you or your baby for a minimum of 48 hours while you are in hospital.

Visitors cannot eat any food while visiting you as this can be upsetting if any of the women in the HDU are not allowed to eat or feel sick.

Please do not bring flowers into the HDU or the delivery suite as they may aggravate allergies. There are no facilities in the delivery suite to store flowers and they may cause unnecessary obstacles in small environments with lots of equipment.

We also ask that you do not bring car seats or prams into the hospital until you have been discharged from the postnatal ward.



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## Midwifery support and care

As well as caring for your physical needs, our staff are also here to support you as you adjust to becoming a mother. We understand that your admission to the HDU is often not planned and can be overwhelming and even quite scary. Please be reassured that we try to make the situation as normal as possible for you, your baby and family.

We recommend that you and your baby get as much skin-to-skin contact as soon as your condition allows.

We will support you with feeding your baby however you choose to do this. If your baby is in the neonatal unit we will guide and assist you in expressing breast milk for your baby if this is your wish. It is recommend that you have a photograph of your baby with you to help with milk flow when expressing. When your clinical condition is stable we will help you to visit your baby in the neonatal unit.

We will also help you with personal hygiene (having a shower, etc.) and will encourage gentle mobilisation (moving around) when it is safe to do this.

You may experience different levels of pain and emotion. We understand this can be frightening and will provide reassurance. We are here to share any worries or fears that you may want to talk about.

We will make sure that appropriate pain relief is provided along with any other support that you need.

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## Facilities

### Telephones

Mobile phones can be used within the HDU. **Do not leave mobile phone chargers plugged in because** this can be a health and safety risk. Once your phone is charged please remove the charger from the socket.

### Refreshments

We will provide fresh water as needed. Sandwiches and hot food are also available. A hostess will ask for your choice of food.

At Queen Charlotte's & Chelsea Hospital, there is a tea and coffee machine in the delivery suite for partners and visitors to use.

For a wider range of refreshments, there is a coffee shop on the ground floor and in the main entrance to Hammersmith Hospital (next door to Queen Charlotte's & Chelsea Hospital).

At St Mary's Hospital refreshments can be bought in the main reception of the Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother building. Food can be brought in for you but we cannot reheat this for health and safety reasons.

### Parking

Car parking is limited at and near all of our hospitals. However, at Queen Charlotte's & Chelsea Hospital you can buy limited one-day parking permits from reception on the ground floor.

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## **Banking and shops**

Cash machines are situated in the main entrance of Hammersmith Hospital, and the Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother building at St Mary's Hospital. There is also a range of shops where you can buy other goods at both hospitals.

## **Property and valuables**

There is limited space in the HDU so we kindly ask that you only bring essential belongings for both you and your baby.

We strongly recommend that you do not bring any valuables into the hospital. Please be aware that valuables brought in are not the responsibility of the Trust or the staff.

If you are transferred to the intensive care unit, we recommend that your belongings are taken home until you are transferred back to the maternity ward.

We do have some basic toiletries in stock, but we encourage you to provide these yourself.

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## Communication

As a Trust we are committed to improving the safety and quality of the service we provide. This includes a responsibility to provide effective communication with you and your family. We consider it important that we communicate openly, clearly and effectively with you and your family throughout your time with us.

Openness is about discussing your care in full, with compassion. We will discuss this as soon as we can with you, so it can help you and staff cope better with what has happened.

If you feel you need to discuss any aspect of your birth experience and / or care then we will arrange for you to meet the appropriate member of the team to discuss this.

An appointment to speak with your consultant obstetrician can also be arranged six weeks after the birth of your baby, for you to discuss your care and ask any further questions you have about your birth experience.

## Feedback about your stay

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any of the questions you may have. If you have any **suggestions** or **comments** about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**) on **020 3313 0088** (Queen Charlotte's & Chelsea Hospital), or **020 3312 7777** (St Mary's Hospital). You can also email PALS at **imperial.pals@nhs.net**. The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

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Alternatively, you may wish to complain by contacting our complaints department:

Complaints department, fourth floor, Salton House, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street, London W2 1NY.

## Alternative formats

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print or easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille or in alternative languages. Please email the communications team:

**[imperial.patient.information@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.patient.information@nhs.net)**

## Wi-Fi

We have a free wi-fi service for basic filtered browsing and a premium wi-fi service (requiring payment) at each of our five hospitals. Look for WiFiSPARK\_FREE or WiFiSPARK\_PREMIUM

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