

Introduction

1.1. Purpose

In order to keep our patients, families, caregivers/supporters and staff as safe as possible during the Covid-19 pandemic we must limit the number of support people attending to a patient during labour and birth. This is in keeping with the provincial health officer's recommendations for physical distancing and the Ministry of Health's limitation on the number of visitors to acute care facilities. This policy aims to balance the importance of support during labour and birth with the necessary infection control restrictions during a pandemic.

1.2. Background

It is recognized that labour support by someone other than a hospital employee can decrease interventions and improve outcomes. Ambulation has been identified as promoting a physiologic birth. Birth is an important event in the life of a couple. Patient's partners are important support people throughout labour, delivery and the postpartum period as they become a family. In addition, should the pregnant patient be ill, having another family member present for bonding with the newborn is essential for the newborn's physical and emotional health.

A doula is a trained labour support person that a family hires or that is provided to them and is considered a part of the care team.

1.3. Scope

This policy applies to all patients admitted to BC Women's Maternal-Newborn Program and their identified support people.

Policy

2.1. Support Person

Throughout labour, delivery and postpartum, a patient is allowed to designate ONE adult asymptomatic support person that will be with them throughout their admission. That ONE person is identified to staff and is allowed to come and go from the unit. This is not to be interpreted as one support person at a time with different people coming and going throughout the admission.

In addition:

- The ONE person must not have any symptoms of a respiratory illness throughout the admission. If symptoms develop they will be asked to put on a mask, wash their hands, and leave the hospital as soon as possible. They will be asked to isolate for at least 10 days from symptom onset or until symptoms have resolved (whichever is longer). Refer them to the BCCDC website for the most current recommendations <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/about-covid-19/if-you-are-sick>. In these circumstances a patient can designate a different asymptomatic person.
- Note: The symptomatic support person cannot remain onsite and wear PPE (Personal Protection Equipment), unless there are extenuating circumstances and program management has deemed the support person to be essential.

- The ONE person is to be identified by a patient identification band that is provided when the patient is admitted. If a new support person is required due to illness, the band will be removed and the new support person provided with a wrist band.
- If the patient is COVID 19+ or a PUI (person under investigation), the ONE person will wear personal protective equipment (PPE) throughout the hospitalization of the patient and will remain in isolation in the patient's room.
- Staff to provide education on proper donning and doffing of PPE to support person as required.

2.2. Doulas

Doulas are considered part of the care team for pregnant patients. The following criteria must be in place when a doula has been requested to accompany the pregnant woman:

- The doula must have recognized doula certification prior to the COVID-19 pandemic declaration, and must provide proof of this when arriving at hospital.
- The doula will only provide support during the period of labour and delivery and only for vaginal births. Doulas will not be permitted to visit in post-partum, or to attend deliveries in the OR.
- The doula must wear clean scrubs, clean shoes/booties and the appropriate PPE provided by the facility while in the hospital.
- The doula will be screened at entry and must be asymptomatic when they provide support. If they become symptomatic during the admission they will be asked to leave by maternity staff.
- If the patient is suspect or COVID+ the doula will not be allowed to participate as part of the care team due to risk of exposure.

2.3. Ambulation in labour

Ambulation is important in promoting a physiologic birth. This is to clarify that:

- Ambulation in hallways is allowed for asymptomatic patients with appropriate social/physical distancing.
- COVID+/PUI and their support person are allowed to ambulate only within their room and must remain in their room with droplet precautions in place as per infection control policy.

Compliance

All care providers and staff members are responsible for adhering to this policy and informing families on these restrictions.

Related Policies

COVID-19 Visitor Restrictions: Policy.

COVID-19 Physical (Social) Distancing While at Work: Guideline

COVID-19 Compassionate Family Presence at End of Life, Death or Pregnancy Loss

Version History

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