

# Maternity High Dependency Care (HDU)

## Welcome to the Maternity High Dependency Unit (HDU)

You have been given this fact sheet because care within the maternity high dependency unit (HDU) has been recommended for you.

The high dependency unit (HDU) is a room located within the labour ward at St Mary's Maternity. It has two beds and provides care for women who need additional support and monitoring before, during or after labour.

You may be admitted to HDU at any stage during your pregnancy or after giving birth. This may be for a variety of reasons, including:

- severe pre-eclampsia (high blood pressure and protein in your urine) or eclampsia (fits due to high blood pressure)
- excessive bleeding before or after birth
- severe infections
- a pre-existing medical condition which requires additional support (including cardiac conditions)
- additional support required with control of your diabetes
- continuing recovery after discharge from the intensive care unit.

Throughout your stay your care will include the monitoring of your well-being through a series of tests including your temperature, blood pressure, pulse and observation of your blood loss. These will be taken regularly when you first move to the HDU and then less frequently as your well-being improves. This will continue throughout the night if required and whilst we appreciate you will be exhausted, your safety is our priority.

The midwives caring for you have been given extra training to ensure you receive excellent care. In addition to this you will be reviewed regularly by the medical team throughout your stay in HDU.

The amount of time you will spend in HDU may vary from a few hours to several days, depending on your well-being. When you are well enough to move around and care for yourself independently and the doctors are happy with your progress, you will be able to continue your care on the postnatal ward.

When you move to the postnatal ward, you will be cared for by a team of midwives and maternity support workers who are also responsible for the well-being of other mothers and their babies. The midwife caring for you will not be based in your room, as they usually are in HDU, but you will have a call bell if you need assistance.

### Visiting your baby in the neonatal unit

If your baby is being cared for in the neonatal unit (NICU), you will be taken to see your baby as soon as you are well enough to do so, however, this may not be immediately after birth. If you are not well enough to visit your baby straight away, your partner will be encouraged to visit the NICU

and take photographs of your baby on your behalf. Your midwife can also telephone the NICU regularly for you to update you on how your baby is doing.

If you are planning to breastfeed your baby please discuss this with your midwife so that, as long as you are well enough, arrangements for feeding your baby or expressing breast milk can be made. If you are planning to bottle feed your baby we will try to ensure you are there to do this too.

### **Receiving visitors**

Receiving visitors whilst in HDU will depend upon how you're feeling and how well you are medically. We welcome your visitors but please speak to the midwife caring for you before you make any arrangements for visitors to come and see you. We would ask that you have a maximum of 2 visitors at a time as you are unwell and space is very limited. When having visitors in HDU we do ask you to think of any other woman being cared for in HDU who may be unwell.

### **Birth Afterthoughts**

We are well aware that receiving high dependency care can be a frightening experience for both you and your family. If you have any concerns please speak to your midwife who can explain your situation to you in more detail. Once you have gone home you can always access the Birth Afterthoughts Service on:

Private line: 01202 448295 please leave a message (the line is not attended at all hours; your message will be answered within 7 days).

Or email: [POH-tr.birthafterthoughts@nhs.net](mailto:POH-tr.birthafterthoughts@nhs.net).

A midwife will arrange to meet with you for a single appointment, which is likely to last for approximately an hour. Your medical records will be available to refer to if you gave birth in Poole and the hope is that you will gain some understanding which will help you.

### **Follow up clinic**

If you have been in our maternity HDU we will invite you to attend a follow up clinic. This is run by a Consultant Obstetrician and a Consultant Midwife. Women often report patchy memories of their time in our HDU so our aim is to discuss the time you spent in there. Prior to the clinic we will send you a questionnaire about memories of your time spent on labour ward and in high dependency and any physical or emotional changes you may feel since being there. We can offer for you to go back to the labour ward if you feel this will help you with any anxieties you may be feeling.

### **Further information**

This fact sheet is intended to give you information and answer some of your more immediate questions. Please feel free to discuss any further questions and concerns with either the midwife caring for you or the midwife in charge of labour ward.

## **Contact details**

**Central Delivery Suite**  
**01202 442114**

For further general health-related information, please ask the relevant department for an information prescription or contact:

The Health Information Centre  
Poole Hospital NHS Foundation Trust  
Longfleet Road  
Poole  
Dorset  
BH15 2JB  
Telephone: 01202 448003

[www.poole.nhs.uk](http://www.poole.nhs.uk)

Author: Abbie Roberts and Lisa Relton  
Date: 23/11/2018  
Reviewed: 30/12/2019  
Review date: 30/12/2022  
Version number: 1.1  
Abbie Roberts. Clinical Lead Midwife Delivery Suite.

**We can supply this information in other formats, in larger print, on audiotape, or have it translated for you. Please call the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 01202 448499, text 07758 272495 or email [pals@poole.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@poole.nhs.uk) for advice.**

**If you wish to make any comments or to ask about any research evidence used to write this leaflet, please contact the Patient Experience team confidentially: phone 01202 448003, write to the Health Information Centre (address above), or email [healthinfo@poole.nhs.uk](mailto:healthinfo@poole.nhs.uk).**