

MEMO

TO: Members of our birthing community

FROM: Virginia Mason Franciscan Health Women's and Children's Leadership

DATE: March 23, 2020 **Updated March 17, 2021**

RE: Doula support for women in labor at Virginia Mason Franciscan Health hospitals

Dear Birthing People in Our Community,

Welcoming the birth of your baby is one of the most memorable events of your life. You have probably spent months planning and imagining what the birth of your baby or babies will be like and you probably did not imagine that a pandemic would be part of your story. We at Virginia Mason Franciscan Health understand that you probably have many questions about what will happen when you arrive to the place where you will give birth during the Covid-19 pandemic and we want to address some of those questions for you.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, Virginia Mason Franciscan Health facilities are operating under the most cautious and safest guidelines for visitors to help keep you, your family and your nurses and providers as safe as possible. We ask that you limit visitors during your stay to two support persons as long as they are not showing symptoms of an illness resembling Covid-19. Doulas are recognized as partners in care and skilled at providing physical and emotional support to birthing people and their

partner. Doulas will be allowed to attend to you in labor if that is part of your unique birth plan. Both support persons will be screened on arrival for symptoms of illness and asked to leave if they show symptoms.

Our goal is to maintain a safe environment for you to welcome your baby into this world and to keep our selfless hospital workers safe too. While we do expect life to become normal again, we don't know exactly when that time will be or how long these extra measures will need to be in place. Information from national and local experts is changing almost every day and as we work together during these difficult times we will all benefit from giving each other grace and flexibility. We encourage you to talk with your healthcare provider if you have any questions or concerns about any aspect of your journey to welcoming your baby. Alternatively, please visit our informative CHIFranciscan.org website for up to date information. We look forward to serving you and your loved ones with reverence, integrity, compassion and excellence.

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Jennifer Riffle, CNM, ARNP, Director of Midwifery, Virginia Mason Franciscan Health

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FAQ

March 23, 2020 **Updated March 17, 2021** and subject to change

Q- Will my partner be able to be with me during my stay?

A- Yes, you will be allowed two asymptomatic (without symptoms) adult support persons during your stay. These same two people will be the designated visitors after delivery has occurred until discharge (overnight visitor restrictions may vary among birth centers). Your support persons should be healthy and have no symptoms of Covid-19 like illness. They should plan to stay with you as much as possible rather than coming and going which increases risk to you and ultimately to your baby because of social exposures to your partner. A support person includes:

- A spouse or partner
- A family member
- A friend
- Trained doula

Q- Will my doula be able to be with me too?

A- Yes, doulas are considered partners in care and will be allowed as long as you are not suspected of or confirmed with Covid-19. If you are suspected to have or confirmed with Covid-19 you will be allowed only one person with you.

Q- Why does there seem to be so many different recommendations for treatment and containment of Covid-19?

A- Covid-19 is a new virus and there is very little evidence to help guide us and national experts in problems like this pandemic. The goal is to try to keep you as safe as possible and as new information emerges they incorporate the new recommendations into their message. At this time, Virginia Mason Franciscan Health locations are using guidance from the CDC¹ and local Health Department³. When you are confused by what you hear we strongly encourage you to have discussions with your healthcare provider about specific questions you may have.

Q- What will happen if I have Covid-19 or Covid-19-like symptoms when I am having my baby?

A- All members of your care team (i.e. nurses, doctors, midwives, etc.) and your support person will wear personal protective equipment (PPE)² while in your room to keep from becoming infected themselves. Your baby may stay in a separate area to help prevent the baby from becoming infected. The CDC recommends that “the risks and benefits of temporary separation...be discussed with the mother by the healthcare team”¹. We will provide you with all the equipment and support you need to provide breastmilk to your baby, if that is your feeding plan.

Resources

1. Interim Considerations for Infection Prevention and Control of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in Inpatient Obstetric Healthcare Settings. CDC, Feb 18, 2020. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/inpatient-obstetric-healthcare-guidance.html>
2. Frequently Asked Questions about Personal Protective Equipment. CDC, Feb 14, 2020. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/respirator-use-faq.html>
3. 2019 Novel Coronavirus Outbreak (COVID-19). Washington Department of Health. <https://www.doh.wa.gov/emergencies/coronavirus>
4. COVID-19 Resources for Maternal and Infant Health. California Maternal Quality Care Collaborative, March 20, 2020. <https://caperinatalprograms.org/>
5. 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Information. Virginia Mason Franciscan Health. <https://www.chifranciscan.org/patients-and-visitors/covid-19.html>