



WOMEN SHOULD HAVE ACCESS TO A KNOWN BIRTH PARTNER IN LABOUR

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In response to the current health crisis, the related health advice and recommendations for social distancing Australian College of Midwives (ACM) support recommendations that women birthing in hospital have one chosen support person with her for labour and birth. This aligns to the [World Health Organisation advice](#) that all women 'should have access to a companion of her choice'.

IN DETAIL:

All women have the right to a safe and positive childbirth experience and we have strong empirical evidence that shows that the safety and well-being of women is improved when they are supported by a trusted birth partner throughout labour, in addition to their midwife or obstetrician.

As trusted health professionals we must not lose sight of this fundamental requirement for women, or we are at risk of adding to the anxiety that women may be experiencing during this health crisis.

Recent practice changes have seen the number of people who can attend birth with the woman in the hospital setting reduced to one. We understand and support the rationale behind these changes, which have been implemented to not only safeguard the health of the woman but also the health of the maternity staff supporting her and all people who access the health service. However, this should not impact on the ability for the woman to have a trusted, personally chosen birth partner during her labour and birth, unless they are unwell.

In order to provide safe care birth partners who, have or are suspected of having, coronavirus are being restricted from accessing health services (and should be self-isolating). These are safe and responsible measures to protect the community. In such cases women should be supported to choose an alternative birth support companion such as another (healthy and well) family member or friend.

These changes and restrictions to numbers of people supporting women during labour and birth will likely also apply to antenatal and postnatal care including people visiting the woman. Reducing the number of people who attend antenatal or postnatal appointments reduces the risk of exposure to the midwife, the woman and her family.

For comment, please contact:

ACM Midwifery Advisor Ruth King on 0408 618 227
ACM Midwifery Advisor Megan Cooper on 0409 199 087
ACM President Terri Barrett on 0419 116 772

Additional information: The Australian College of Midwives

The Australian College of Midwives (ACM) is the peak professional body for midwives in Australia who are registered with, and regulated by, the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA). ACM's position is that women be attended during pregnancy, birth and postnatally by a midwife who is registered with the NMBA.