

This leaflet was produced as a recommendation of a patient working group on ways to promote improved safety in patient care and to empower patients to take greater control over their health and well-being whilst in hospitals in Ireland.



National Healthcare Charter  
**you and your  
health service**



## Get involved!

Find out about how you can get involved in improving health services in Ireland.

The HSE is actively inviting service users to get involved on patient forums and quality improvement initiatives. To find out more contact:

National Advocacy Unit, HSE,  
Quality & Patient Safety Directorate,  
Health Service Executive, Oak House,  
Millennium Park, Naas, Co. Kildare

Tel: (045) 880 400  
Email: [yoursay@hse.ie](mailto:yoursay@hse.ie)  
[www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie)



Find out about (IMEWS)  
**Irish Maternity  
Early Warning System**

*people caring for people*

Tús Áite do  
Shábháilteacht 1 Othar  
Patient Safety 1 First



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive  
Quality and Patient Safety Directorate



**OBSTETRICS AND  
GYNAECOLOGY**

To ensure that any change in your condition is picked up early, maternity hospitals in Ireland have an early warning system in place called IMEWS. This system is used along with clinical assessment to detect any change in your condition and to improve the decision making about the care that you might need if you are ill during your pregnancy.

### ***Pregnancy is a normal healthy event***

Most healthy women have a normal pregnancy and birth and do not suffer any illness as a result of pregnancy. However, for a minority of women this is not the case. To ensure that any change in a woman's condition is picked up early, maternity hospitals in Ireland have a system in place called the Irish Maternity Early Warning System (IMEWS).

### ***Get involved!***

The responsibility for patient safety remains with your healthcare team. However, you also play a vital role in the decision making about your care. We encourage you to ask questions and become fully informed and involved in the decision making about your care. **Remember - it's safer to ask.**

### ***Your vital signs***

The maternity team assess your vital signs while you are in hospital. Vital signs are signs that are essential for life, for example breathing and heart rate.

### ***The maternity team:***

- Assess your breathing, your heart rate and your level of consciousness
- Take your blood pressure and temperature
- Assess the level of oxygen in your blood.

All of these measurements are recorded in your observation chart for ongoing monitoring.

### ***What is IMEWS?***

IMEWS is a system for the early detection of illness during pregnancy and after a woman has had a baby. This system is in place across all maternity hospitals in Ireland. Due to the changes which take place in a woman's body during pregnancy and after the baby is born, it is often difficult to detect a severe illness. IMEWS helps to detect earlier if a woman has developed a severe illness and it helps provide safe, high quality care in a timely manner for all women using our maternity services.

**IMEWS helps maternity teams to make decisions in relation to the care that women might need if they are ill during pregnancy.**

**It also alerts the maternity team to:**

- Carry out a full review of your condition
- Carry out tests or investigations
- Make a plan for ongoing care
- Make the right decision in relation to the type of care that is needed.

### ***Let your midwife know, if you are feeling unwell***

The midwifery/nursing staff will inform the doctor requesting that they intervene early to prevent your condition from getting worse.