

What is a Doula?

A doula provides support for a woman and her husband or partner during and after childbirth.

What type of support is provided?

Emotional Support → Encouragement, Reassurance, Continuous physical presence

Informational Support → Assistance to families in gathering information about the course of their labor & their options, Explanations, Non-medical advice

Physical Support → Comfort measures, Positioning, Massage, Breathing, Relaxation, & other Non-pharmacological pain relief measures

Advocacy → Advocates for the client's wishes as expressed in her birth plan, in prenatal conversations, and intrapartum discussion. Doulas encourage the mother & partner to ask questions of the caregiver and to express their preferences and concerns. A doula does not speak for or make decisions for the mother and partner.

Partner Support → Role modeling, Encouragement, Reassurance, Extra Set of Hands

What are the Benefits of Continuous Support During Labour?

A review of 15 studies with 13,000 women found that women with continuous supportive care from a companion were more likely to avoid cesarean birth and other major medical interventions and were more satisfied with their birth experience. These results were even greater when the continuous care was a non-hospital staff and a non-family member. These women were:

- 26% less likely to give birth by cesarean section
- 41% less likely to give birth with vacuum extraction or forceps
- 28% less likely to use any analgesia or anesthesia
- 33% less likely to be dissatisfied with or negatively rate their birth experience¹

What outcomes have been noticed in the weeks following labour?

Six trials compared postpartum outcomes of women who had doulas and those that did not. The results showed that women who had doulas experienced more positive outcomes between weeks 4-8 than those without doulas. The results were:

- Enhanced breastfeeding
- Better maternal-infant interaction
- Less postpartum depression, anxiety, & greater self-esteem
- Higher maternal assessments of their baby when compared to the “standard baby”
- Greater satisfaction with their birth experience

Why Can't a Nurse Provide Continuous Support?

Nurses along with all hospital staff are subject to hospital policies and regulations limiting their duties. There are also shift changes, diverse staff responsibilities, and staff shortages.

Where can I read more about Doula Support?

The Doula Book, 2002 by Klaus, Kennell, & Klaus

The Birth partner: Everything You Need to Know to Help a Woman through Childbirth, 2nd Ed, 2001 by Simkin

¹ Hodnett ED, Gates S, Hofmeyr GJ, Sakala C. [Continuous support for women during childbirth](#). The Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2003. Issue 3.

What Services Does a Doula Provide?

Prenatal Visits

A prenatal visit will take place 1-2 months before your due date. At this visit all those who will be providing emotional & physical support should attend. At this visit we will discuss your birth history & plans for the upcoming birth, along with any expectations you have of myself as the doula & all others involved. Also any fears or concerns that you or your partner may have can be freely discussed.

If time allows another prenatal visit will occur closer to your due date. At this time we can practice some comfort techniques to help prepare you and your husband or partner for the day of the birth.

Birth

I will attend the birth from the moment that I am needed, please notify me as soon as you are in labour even if I am not needed at that time. You will have a list of numbers by which to get in contact with me. A backup doula will be available in the event that I cannot be reached. A backup doula can be someone that you choose or if you wish I will schedule someone who I have a working relationship with. During the labour and delivery I will be present to support the couple however I am needed. I remain after the delivery to help establish breastfeeding and help to answer any questions that you may have.

Postnatal Visits

Postnatal visits will occur more frequently as it is an adjustment adding another member to the family. If possible a visit the day after delivery or arrival home from the hospital will occur. At this time help with breastfeeding, diaper changing, etc will take place. We will also discuss the birth and events that occurred, this will help as I write the birth story for you to have. I will have the birth story finished for you 2 months after the arrival of your baby. Another visit will occur approximately 3 days after the birth or arrival home. If needed a final visit about 2 weeks later can also be scheduled.

Postpartum Doula Support

If you wish to hire a postpartum doula please let me know and I can provide contact numbers. Postpartum doulas help with many different aspects of adjustment to an additional member of the family. Some families seek postpartum help if they have multiple children and the spouse/partner is away throughout the day or night or a single or first time mom may seek this type of support. Support can be provided during the day or at night, which ever is needed and this can be discussed with the Postpartum Doula that you hire.

If you have any questions please contact Leah at 705.446.2200