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## What is a Doula

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Doulas are trained support persons that are a valuable addition to your pregnancy and upcoming birth. According to Doulas of North America (DONA), “a growing body of research shows that the use of a doula has clear benefits for families during childbirth and postpartum with no known risks” ([www.DONA.org](http://www.DONA.org)). There are several different types of doulas. The two most popular types of doulas are:

- 1- Birth Doula: Provides educational support throughout pregnancy in preparation for the birth. She also provides informational, physical and emotional support throughout labor, birth and immediate postpartum to new parents.
- 2- Postpartum Doula: Assists with the physical and emotional recovery of Mom, basic breastfeeding support, newborn care education, meal preparation/planning and light housekeeping. She can also help support sibling transition.

### Why hire a doula when I have a midwife?

A midwife is a wonderful healthcare provider to have! To ensure your birth remains safe however, the midwife must perform many tasks, observations and maintain consistent documentation throughout your labor and birth. These requirements can understandably distract her attention from your constant emotional and physical needs.

While the midwife does her job to ensure your birth is safe, the doula is better able to provide the uninterrupted physical and emotional support to whatever degree you need throughout your experience.

### **Other benefits of having a doula present throughout labor:**

#### **Women who are supported by a doula throughout labor have:**

- 50% reduction in Caesarean rate
- 25% shorter labor
- 60% reduction in epidural requests
- 40% reduction in artificial oxytocin use
- 30% reduction in analgesic use

#### **Six weeks after birth, mothers who had doulas experienced:**

- Less anxiety and depression
- More confidence with the baby
- More satisfaction with their partner

#### **Long-term benefits include:**

- Decreased postpartum depression
- Improved breastfeeding success rates
- Increased time spent with baby
- More positive maternal assessments of baby's personality and health
- Increase sense of maternal competence

*Source: Mothering the Mother, by M.H. Klaus, J.H. Kennell, and P.H. Klaus; Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, New York (1993).*

## **What is my partner' s role if I hire a doula?**

Before experiencing a doula for the first time, many families are concerned that a doula may take away from dad' s role at the birth. This is a common misconception. Trained doulas understand the important role of the father in the birth of his child and use their skills to enhance this role rather than replace it. Her desire is not to do dad' s work, but to help guide dad on how to better support mom throughout the labor and birth. She is also able to recognize fear, stress or concerns dad may have throughout the process and can become a very valuable support person for him as well. The other benefit of hiring a doula is she can work with you when dad needs a few personal moments throughout the labor where he can unnoticeably slip away to grab a quick bite to eat, take a bathroom break or even get a quick snooze for the longer labors.

Also important to note is that The Doula Book as well as many experienced doulas will tell you that few fathers want to be, nor should they be the sole support person in the room!

## **Should I hire a doula if I already have experienced family members attending my birth?**

Yes! We all know family members mean well and if you want them to be a part of your experience then they will remain a valuable member of your support team! However, in the heat of a tough labor many family members are unable to remove themselves from the emotional attachment they have with the mother and in response they fail to provide the support she needs most in that moment to pull through it. Every woman in labor needs the presence of her chosen partners throughout the experience, but also benefit tremendously from the calm, skillful and continuously objective ability of the experienced doula.

## **When and how should I hire a doula?**

Now! It's never too soon to make contact with a few doulas in your area to decide which is the best fit for your birthing desires. Many women are now choosing their doulas during the end of their first trimester to not only establish a relationship with her early on, but also to secure their due date. Keep in mind that most doulas book only a certain number of clients around the same due date, so the earlier you officially hire your doula, the more likely you will be able to have your first choice! Also, you want to make sure your doula provides a back-up doula to you in the instance that two of their clients have their babies at the same time. You should try and meet this backup doula at some point throughout your pregnancy as well!

## **Our Doula Recommendations:**



*Click the logo to go to their website*

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